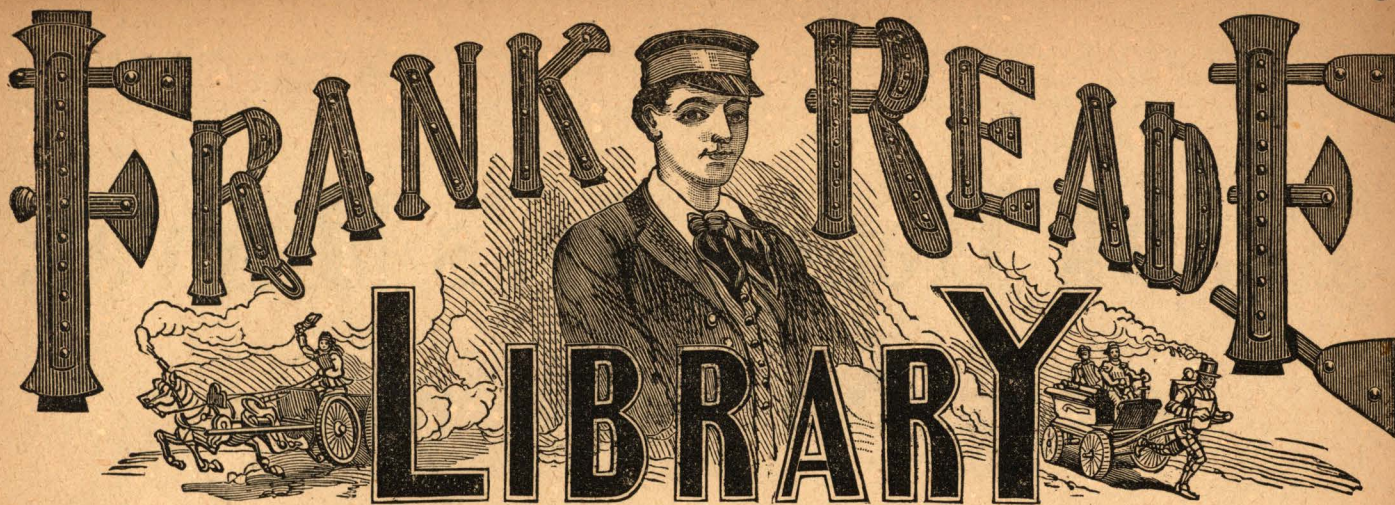


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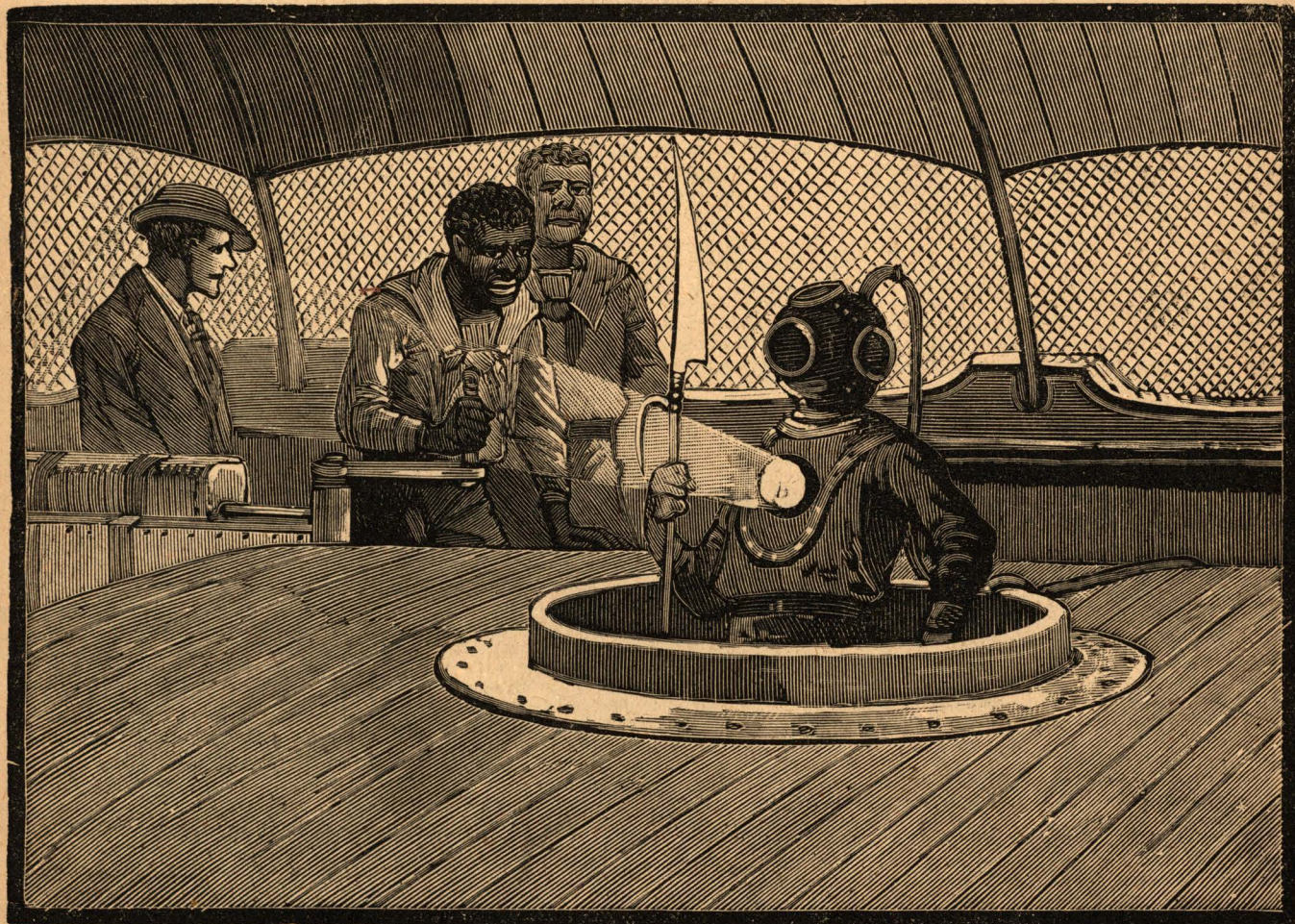
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Vol. II

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# Frank Reade, Jr.'s Marvel; OR, ABOVE AND BELOW WATER. By "NONAME."



"Be careful about the signals," said Frank, as he stood on the brink of the well. "A mistake might cost me my life." Then he made the descent, and in another minute or two he was down in the soft mud at the bottom of the river again.



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# Frank Reade, Jr.'s Marvel;

OR,

## ABOVE AND BELOW WATER.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., and His Air-Ship," "Frank Reade Jr.'s New Electric Terror the 'Thunderer,'" etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### POMP AND BARNEY—THE GOVERNOR'S LETTER.

THE snow had fallen deep in and about Readestown, the old home of the famous Reade family. It was snow, snow everywhere, and the merry jingle of sleigh-bells was hoard on all sides.

Readestown has grown to be quite a little city, and it is still growing. With each new invention of the Reades—father or son—the town takes an upward turn, for its name is then heard around the world.

Frank Reade, Sr. is sitting by the cozy fire in his study, thinking of the past triumphs of himself and son in the scientific world, and waiting for his daily mail, which Pomp—faithful old Pomp—had gone to the post-office to get.

Pomp is the same happy, good-natured darkey he always was—at the time of which we write—whom everybody in Readestown loved for his many good qualities.

He is coming around the corner of the square with a package of letters and papers for the elder Reade, when an immense snow-ball landed against his ear with such force as to make his head swim, and stars to dance before his eyes.

"Ugh—oof! Who dat?" he ejaculated, looking around in quest of the author of the missile.

There were quite a number of people on the street, and Pomp knew them all. He was sure that there was only one in sight just then who was capable of doing such a thing as planting a snow-ball in his ear, and that was Barney O'Shea, the jolly Irishman.

Barney was looking as innocent as a Kilkenny cat in the day-time, however.

Pomp eyed him suspiciously across the street for a minute or so, and then stooped, crammed the mail in the capacious pocket of his great-coat, and then proceeded to make a ball of snow, packing it as hard as his brawny muscles could make it.

Barney was watching him out of the corners of his eyes, and chuckling way down inside of himself that he had given "the naygur wan forinst his ear, begob."

When he had finished the ball, Pomp quietly started toward the house, as if for the purpose of delivering the mail before firing it.

That caused Barney to look around at some boys who were snow-balling each other further up the street.

Ah! That was Pomp's ruse!

Swish! went the ball, taking Barney on the left ear with such force as to send him rolling over and over in the snow.

"What's the matter wid youse, Barney?" Pomp asked, with a broad grin that seemed to run half-way round his black visage.

"Giant's av Fingal!" gasped Barney, picking himself up and rubbing his ear. "It's kilt I am! Struck by loightning in the dead av winther!"

Then he caught sight of the grinning countenance of Pomp. That was more than he could stand.

"Whoop!" he yelled, and making a dash across the street, he went for Pomp like a wild buffalo.

Pomp met him with his head—butting him in the stomach and rolling over in the snow with him.

In the *melee* the mail flew in every direction out of the pocket of Pomp's great-coat.

But they were up again in a minute, and, as a policeman was coming down the street, they quietly walked off.

Pomp remained just long enough to pick up the letters and papers, and then went in to deliver them.

Several days later a citizen of Readestown, in passing along the street, discovered a crumpled letter lying in the snow. He stooped and picked it up, and saw that it had never been opened.

It was addressed to:

"Frank Reade, Sr.,

"Readestown,

"Iowa."

"Why, bless my soul!" the citizen exclaimed; "Mr. Reade surely has never received this letter. I'll carry it to him—just over the way."

Mr. Frank Reade, Sr., was sitting in his business office when the citizen called and handed him the letter, explaining how he found it in the snow on the street.

Mr. Reade looked at the postmark and said: "I am very much obliged to you, sir. I ought to have received this several days ago," and then he broke it open, to read as follows:

"NEW ORLEANS, LA., Jan'y 18, 187—.

"DEAR SIR,—Your world-wide fame as an inventor induces me to write to you about a matter of very great importance.

"During the war of the Rebellion the Red River country in this State was the scene of very active operations at one time. Some severe fighting took place between the contending forces, and many millions of dollars' worth of property was destroyed. A very large sum of money belonging to this State was being removed to a certain point for safe-keeping, and, being again in danger of capture, it was ordered to be removed in the night-time to another place. In attempting to cross the Red River, the treasure was lost overboard, and has never been recovered. It amounts to nearly one million in gold. Many of the men who were present when it was last seen have since died; but others, who have some knowledge of the affair, have tried to get at it, but in vain. Diving men from the North, with complete diving apparatus, have been there in search of it; but they complained that the muddy condition of the water rendered it impossible to see

how to do anything, and so they gave it up and went away. Now, can you not set your inventive genius to work to evolve a method by which this vast sum can be recovered? As Governor of Louisiana, I hereby offer you, as an inducement to undertake the job, *one-half of all you may recover*, and will furthermore extend to you all the aid and protection you may require.

"I am frank to say that there is no little danger in the undertaking, as there are a number of men along the river ready to shoot down the man who is fortunate enough to get the treasure they are after themselves. But, as I said before, you will be backed by the State, and can have a whole regiment with you if necessary. Hoping you may see fit to give this a favorable consideration, I am, dear sir, your most obedient servant,

"JAMES LYLE,

Governor.

"To Frank Reade, Sr."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the famous inventor. "This is the most important letter I ever received in my life! And I came near losing it, too. Pomp! Pomp!"

"Yes, sah," responded Pomp, who was coming in at that moment to look after the fire. "I see comin', sah."

"You black, careless rascal, you! Here's an important letter which you dropped in the street nearly a week ago. This gentleman found and brought it to me. What kind of a way is that to do, eh?"

"Marse Frank, dat fool Barney done dat, suah. He done gone an' gib me er snow-ball in de ear, an' dat made me mad, an'—an'—I butted 'im, sah."

Mr. Reade laughed and told him to be more careful in the future, and then sent him to the telegraph office to send off two dispatches, one to the Governor of Louisiana, as follows:

"READESTOWN, IOWA,

"January 28th, 187—.

"TO GOVERNOR LYLE, New Orleans, La.:

"Your letter received after delay. I will give the matter careful consideration, and communicate with you by mail. Thanking you for your kindness, I am truly yours,

"FRANK READE, Sr."

The other dispatch was to Frank Reade, Jr., who was then in Chicago, and simply said:

"Come home on next train. Important business.

FRANK READE, Sr."

Pomp had the telegrams sent off to their proper destinations, and then returned to the house.

An hour later Mr. Reade received a reply from Frank, Jr., to the effect that he was on the way, and would reach home that night.



## CHAPTER II.

## FRANK AND HIS FATHER—FRANK AT WORK.

POMP was at the depot when the midnight train came in, waiting for the young inventor, of whom he was very fond.

"Hello, Pomp!" greeted Frank, giving him a hearty slap on the shoulder.

"Hello, Marse Frank! Am dat you? Golly, I'se glad ter see yer."

"What's the matter at home, Pomp? Are they all well?"

"Yes, sah, dey is."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that. Father's telegram alarmed me. What's he up to, anyway?"

"Dunno, Marse Frank," said Pomp, taking up his trunk and valise.

"Nothing gone wrong, eh?"

"No, sah."

Frank made his way home, to find his father still out of bed, waiting to greet him.

Father and son shook hands heartily, for they loved each other very much.

"Go to bed now, son," said the father, "and get up in the morning with your thinking cap on. I have some good news for you, that will give you some work to do."

"All right," and Frank shook hands with him again, and went up to his room, where he was soon in the arms of Morpheus.

He was up early, and went out to see Pomp and Barney at the barn. Both were extremely glad to see him, and many a little story did they have to relate to each other about things that had occurred since they were last together.

After breakfast, where he met and greeted his mother and sisters, Frank met his father in his study, and sat down to a table that was pretty well covered with books, maps, papers, and models.

"Just read that, Frank," said the elder Reade, handing his son the letter he had received from the Governor of Louisiana.

Frank read it through very carefully, and then looked across the table at his father.

"Well," said the latter, "what do you think of it?"

"Why, I think you ought to accept the offer, of course," was the prompt reply.

His father smiled.

"You are not going to decline, I hope?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes. I think I shall," was the quiet reply.

"Why, father, that is not like you at all! Success there would double your fortune, and—"

"I am aware of that, my son," said his father, interrupting him. "But at my time of life one does not care for such stirring adventures. I have seen enough of that kind of life. I shall write to the Governor of Louisiana, declining his munificent offer, and suggest that he make to Frank Reade, Jr., who is—"

"Ah! Thank you, father, a thousand times!" cried Frank, springing and reaching across the table to grasp his father's hand.

"Oh, you would accept it, eh?"

"Yes, of course I would."

"Do you think you could get up such a thing as would enable you to find that treasure?"

"I think so."

"Then I will telegraph to Governor Lyle that you will undertake the job?"

"Yes, sir."

The dispatch was written and sent to the telegraph office, and then the two famous inventors resumed their seats, and talked over the matter long and seriously.

"One must have a diving outfit," said Frank, Jr., "and that is something I know but little about. But I can soon get all the points I want about such things."

"Oh, yes, that is easily managed," said Frank, Sr. "The most difficult thing is to overcome the density of the muddy waters of Red River."

"I think a powerful electric light will do much to overcome that," remarked Frank, Jr.

"Ah! Yes, I never thought of that. Then you will have to look out for your life. Those fellows down there don't place much value on human life, you know."

"I think they do, if the life happens to be their own."

"Of course, but not otherwise."

"True. But I have had dealings with such people before, father, and do not fear them in the least. I'll build an electric boat that will be light enough to be carried on the cars, and yet entirely bullet-proof."

"That's the idea!" exclaimed his father, with considerable enthusiasm. "You might get up something on the style of your electric boat."

"On that principle, father, I will set my builders to work on it at once, and then go on to New York to examine the different kinds of diving outfits there;" and taking up a pencil and paper, he proceeded to make a drawing of the kind of boat he thought he would need for such an enterprise as that suggested by Governor Lyle's letter.

The hours flew by, and still he sat there drawing designs, until sheet after sheet of the drawing-paper lay scattered about on the table, covered with all sorts of crude pictures. He worked incessantly whenever an idea took possession of him, and his inventive genius would not let him sleep or rest till he had found the secret he was in search of.

It was midnight when he laid down his pencil.

"I have hit it!" he exclaimed, drawing a long breath of relief, "and now I will have some sleep, for to-morrow I must start for Chicago and New York."

He went to bed to seek the rest his long mental strain demanded, and in a little while he was in a deep sleep.

The next day he told Pomp and Barney that he would expect them to go with him on a dangerous expedition in the early spring.

Barney gave a whoop, and said he would go to the end of the world with him.

Pomp looked grave and shook his head.

"Dis heah nigger ain't er gwine to do no mo' flyin', Marse Frank. Done gone an' got nuff of dat foolishness."

"Oh, we are going in a boat this time, Pomp," said the young inventor, laughing. "Something like the Electric Boat up on the lakes, you know. You had a good time on that, you recollect?"

"Yes, sah. I ain't afraid ob no boat, 'kase I can swim."

And the faithful old black grinned, and said he would be ready to go whenever the boat was ready.

That day Frank took leave of his parents and sisters, and boarded the train for Chicago, having all the designs for the boat in his possession.

Going to his hotel, he retired to rest, and early the next morning set out to find the man who had built the electric boat for him two years before.

He found him in his shop, and in less than an hour's time had contracted with him for such a craft as the drawings called for.

"Make everything of the best material," he said to the builder, "and leave the electric machinery to me. I will look after it myself when I come back from New York."

Then he took the train for New York, to which city he went for the purpose of looking after a diving suit that would answer his purpose.

In the place where such things were made and sold, he examined various suits.

"Now," said he to the proprietor, "I see that you haven't got just what I want; but I think you can make it for me. I want a suit with a powerful electric light in the breast, and all strong enough to resist the onslaught of alligators."

The man looked at him in great surprise, and asked:

"Are you a diver?"

"No."

"I thought so," and there was a sneer in his tones. "I don't think you know what you want."

Frank reddened in the face, and said:

"You are mistaken, sir. I know just what I want, and if you can't take my order, I will take it elsewhere. There are people in your

line who would feel highly honored in receiving an order from Frank Reade, Jr."

At the mention of his name the manufacturer glared at him in unfeigned surprise. He had heard of Frank Reade, Jr., as one of the most wonderful inventors of the age.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Reade," he said. "Your name is a guarantee that you do know what you want. When do you wish the suit?"

"In ten days."

"It shall be ready for you, sir," he said.

That business ended, Frank went to the makers of electric machinery and contracted for a certain machine for use on the boat.

Then he spent the ten days in looking after other things that would be needed in his new venture. Almost every day he would drop in at both places to inspect the work, his great reputation as an inventor giving him privileges that would not have been accorded any other customer.

In due time the diving-suit was finished and tested.

He went down into thirty feet of muddy water, and was delighted with the result.

Then he examined the electric machinery, and found it all right, after which he ordered it to be packed up and sent to his address. Then he took the train west, and arrived ahead of the freight.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE "MARVEL."

Just three months after receiving the letter from the Governor of Louisiana, Frank wrote to his father from Chicago that everything was ready for the trip down South.

"Send me Pomp and Barney at once," the letter said, "and meet me yourself at Joliet, on the Illinois river, on Wednesday next. We will launch the 'Marvel'—the name of the boat—there, and put in the machinery for an early start. I consider this the biggest thing I ever got up, and am particularly anxious that you should see it. Your approval will go a long way in assuring me of success. Love to mother and the girls."

"Your dutiful son,

"FRANK, JR."

Two days after mailing the letter he found Barney and Pomp at the hotel waiting for him. The two faithful fellows were eager to see the new invention and find out what it was for.

"Youse ain't gwine arter no mo' Injuns, eh, Marse Frank?" Pomp asked.

"No, Pomp. You won't see an Indian during the whole trip, I don't think. We are going away down South, among your people."

"Whoop! Golly!" exclaimed Pomp, grinning from ear to ear.

"Bedad! an' its naygurs we'll welt!" said Barney, making a good-natured pass at Pomp.

"Look heah, Barney," said Pomp, shaking his head at the Irishman. "Dem niggers kin butt wuss'n er mule kin kick. Doan' youse go foolin' wid 'em."

"Come, we must be off," said Frank. "Take my valise, Pomp. The trunk has already been checked."

They went down to the depot for freight, and then saw a boat twenty-eight feet long on an open freight-car, covered by an immense sailcloth.

"There's the boat," said Frank. "I want you two to get up there and guard it till you see me again."

They did so, mounting the car and taking their seats on the stern of the boat.

Then Frank went into the conductor's car, and the train moved out.

In three hours they reached Joliet, a distance of only fifty or sixty miles from Chicago.

There were a dozen men on hand to aid in launching the boat, which was not a very difficult thing to do, seeing that the machinery and guards were not on board.

That done, he dismissed the hired men and set to work, with the aid of Barney and Pomp, to put in the electric machinery.

Everything fitted to its place as if the whole had been molded together.

All night long they worked, and succeeded



in getting everything in shape before daylight. They then lay down in their berths on board, and went to sleep.

About nine o'clock they woke up and had breakfast, and then saw that a crowd had assembled on the river-bank, gazing in wonder at the strange craft.

By and by Frank's father came, and was hailed by all three and taken aboard.

"What in the world is all this you have been getting up, Frank?" his father asked, as he grasped his son's hand when he stepped on board.

"This is the 'Marvel,' father," replied Frank, with pardonable pride, "and a marvel it will prove to be. It has almost the speed of the Electric Boat on the lakes, having similar machinery, and is as snug a craft as ever skimmed the water."

"So it seems," remarked his father, looking around in admiration at the wonderful invention.

"I will take you down to the next town with us," said Frank, "so you can see how it works. You can take the cars home from there instead of here."

"Yes—yes—go ahead."

Frank, having taken everything on board necessary for the trip, took hold of the helm, pulled the knob of the electric battery, and the boat moved gracefully out into the middle of the stream.

Turning down-stream, the boat spurted ahead with such speed as to cause the people on the river-bank to cheer lustily, and in a few minutes they were leaving the town behind them.

"This is wonderful speed in the water," remarked Frank Reade, Sr., as he stood up and watched the trees flitting past.

"Yes, indeed," returned Frank. "Speed may be necessary—we don't know always," and then he proceeded to give his father a detailed description of the boat.

"It is twenty-eight feet in length by seven in breadth," he said, "with cabin-room for six, as you may see there," pointing into the snug little cabin, "and a galley for cooking in the rear of it. The battery and machinery are out of sight under this chest here, as was the case with the electric boat, but controlled by these knobs and cranks. Now, do you notice this wheel here back of this chest? That is a wonderful invention, I can tell you. Pomp!"

"Sah!"

"Take hold of the crank on that wheel and turn it quickly."

"Yes, sah."

Pomp took hold of the handle which projected from the rim of the wheel, and began turning rapidly.

Presto, what a change!

For a moment it seemed as if the boat were rising out of the water. The sides flew up and met over their heads, making a complete covering—or roof—of steel, whilst all round the sides ran a strip of wire netting, some three feet wide, which admitted both air and light.

"That wire netting is tripled, father," said Frank, "and being made of the best Bessemer steel, is bullet-proof. Nothing but a cannon-ball could break it. Thus you see we will be like the turtle—able to draw into our shell and defy a thousand enemies."

"Yes, yes—wonderful."

"Here are small port-holes for rifles, if we have to use them. And we have an assortment of the best arms in the chest. We call it the 'Marvel,' because everybody will marvel when they see it. It will be a marvel in every respect."

"I should say so. But how about the diving-suit?"

"Ah! That's another marvel, I assure you. Here it is. I will put it on for you. It has a powerful electric light in the breast, so as to light up the muddy water in front of me. A wire connected with the battery on board will supply the electric light in the diving-suit."

He put on the suit, and stood up before his father, looking like a strange monster from some unknown region below. He picked up various implements, such as sharp steel hooks

and points, to be used in searching in the muddy bottoms for the kegs of gold, or in defense against alligators, if he should be attacked.

"Admirable—admirable!" exclaimed his father, as he saw that nothing had been left undone to assure success. "But you may be shot from the shore as you go overboard in that suit."

"Oh, no! Come back here to the rear of the cabin," and Frank led the way round to the rear, leaving Barney in charge of the wheel. There he lifted a trap-door, revealing a hole three feet in diameter, through which they could see the boiling water below as the boat skimmed along.

"Splendid—splendid! You have hit it, my boy!" and the delighted father seized his son's hand and shook it warmly.

Then Frank laid aside the diving-suit, and gave many other little bits of information about the "Marvel" that were quite interesting to his father. He showed him the provision-chest, the arms-chest, and the place for clothes and other things.

"You are thoroughly equipped, Frank," said his father. "I shall have no uneasiness whatever about you."

"I am glad of that, father. I wanted you to see for yourself and be satisfied."

"I am perfectly satisfied, my boy. Give my respects to the governor, and hand him this letter. It may be of service to you. Be sure and make a friend of him, and let him see that you mean business. You will have to go to New Orleans first and see him, you know."

"That's my intention."

The next town was now in sight, and Frank Reade, Sr., was landed, to return home by rail. The "Marvel" then fired a salute from a small cannon on her bow, and sped down the river like a rocket.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ON THE WAY DOWN SOUTH.

As the "Marvel" sped along down the river, the people, who saw it from either bank, were lost in wonder at its marvelous speed. There was no smokestack or smoke, nor any visible machinery, nor any sound save that made by the keel cutting through the water. Its speed was about double that of the fastest steam-boat, a fact that made every one stare in amazement.

"Dis is better dan scrapin' de sky wid dat flyin' mersheen, Marse Frank," remarked Pomp, with pleasurable pride, as he watched the workings of the wonderful little boat.

"It's roight ye are, Pomp," said Barney;

"but it's flyin' we are all the same."

"Dat's er fac," answered Pomp, with a chuckle. "Dis nigger doan' mind dis heah kinder flyin'. Yer doan' git in no clouds, an' de wind an' de lightnin' doan' make yer wool stan' up straight. Oh, dis am jolly!"

"Begorra, yez spake the truth, ef yez are a naygur," said Barney, laughing good-naturedly, as he proceeded to fill his pipe for a comfortable smoke.

"We'll beat everything on the river," remarked Frank, as he glanced at the trees along the banks of the stream. They were flitting past like telegraph poles as an express train whirled by them.

"Yis, sor," said Barney; "we'll bate ther loife out av the ould shtame-boats."

Several villages were passed and a number of boats overtaken on their way down the river. As the "Marvel" shot past the steamers the captains and crews stared in dumfounded amazement. One burly captain cried out from the pilot-house:

"What craft is that?"

"The 'Marvel,'" responded Frank.

"Where from?"

"Chicago!"

"The deuce!" exclaimed the astonished captain. "How did you get to this river from Chicago?"

"We came overland through the dew," said Frank.

The captain howled back something, but the great speed of the "Marvel" had carried the

young inventor beyond hearing, and the words were lost; but, a mile away, Frank saw the steam-boat captain gazing after him through a spy-glass.

"Guess he has got a flea in his ear," chuckled Frank, as he returned the captain's gaze.

After awhile Frank began to give Barney and Pomp instructions as to the proper management of the boat. It was never to be left alone, nor was any one ever to be allowed on board without his order or consent. Then he showed Pomp the kitchen arrangements, which were so complete that nothing else was to be desired. The tool-chest, cabin and berths—all were inspected and explained, so that the two would not be making any mistake in the discharge of their duties.

"Now, see here," he continued, as he stood on the bow of the boat and looked up at the steel cover. "Where we are going we may be under the necessity of doing some fighting, hence I have made this thing bullet-proof. No rifle-ball can penetrate it, and this wire netting is equally impervious to lead. Here are small adjustable port-holes, through which we can fire in any direction, if necessary. We are going down into Louisiana to search for money that was thrown into the Red River during the war. That's what the diving-suit is for. If we succeed in recovering the gold, it will be the biggest thing I've struck yet. Now, I've brought you two along because I have confidence in you. You know me, and I think I know you. Do your duty, and your reward shall be in proportion to the success of the enterprise."

"Pomp is right dar ebervy time, Marse Frank," said the faithful black, when the young inventor had ceased speaking.

"Bedad, an' it's Barney O'Shea phat niver gets left," put in Barney. "Sure, an' isn't it meself as 'ud be afther goin' to the Ould Nick wid yer?"

"Oh, that's all right, boys," said Frank, laughing. "I only wanted you both to know that you are my right-hand men, that's all."

"Bedad, an' it's enough," remarked Barney, who was holding on to the helm. In his anxiety to catch all that Frank was saying, he came near running the "Marvel" against a huge log that was floating down the river.

Frank saw the log, and turned quickly on the Irishman with:

"Did you see that log, Barney?"

"Yis, sor."

"How far off?"

"Sure, not till we wor forninst it."

"That's what I thought. Now, see here, both of you. This boat is both strong and light, but it's not a battering ram. Going as fast as we are now, a collision with a log like that would ruin us. It would have made a terrible wreck of the whole business. Therefore, when you are in charge and running her, keep a lookout ahead. No matter what is going on aboard, keep a lookout ahead."

Both promised not to forget the lesson, and Frank lit a cigar and walked about the little deck, admiring everything connected with the marvelous little craft.

When night came on, the pale moon came with it, giving light enough for them to see far ahead on the water. Pomp went down into the little kitchen and began preparations for supper.

He was a splendid cook, and knew just how to prepare Frank's favorite dishes. Every good thing that could be had in the market at that season was to be found in the provision chest, and so the faithful old black went to work to get up a good supper.

When it was ready, Frank sat down and ate heartily, after which he came out and relieved Barney, to let him go down and fill himself up.

That night they passed through Peoria Lake, quite a large sheet of water caused by the expansion of the river. On the right bank of the lake stood the town of Peoria. The numerous gaslights of the streets of the town resembled torchlight processions.

After passing through the lake, Frank told Pomp to lie down and sleep till he was called



up, and then instructed Barney to steer till two o'clock, when Pomp or himself would relieve him.

Thus he arranged to keep the boat going continuously day and night, which was his design till they reached the city of New Orleans.

The next day they struck the Mississippi River.

"Now, we must keep a good lookout for logs," said Frank to Barney and Pomp, "for things of that kind may always be found in this river. It's the greatest river in the world, you know, and does some big things sometimes."

"Sure, an' it's nasty wather," remarked Barney, as he looked at the rolling, boiling water of the mighty river.

"Yes—that's so. It's not good for drinking. That's why I brought a tank and filter along."

"Look dar!" cried Pomp, pointing down the river at one of the monster steamboats that run up and down the stream.

"That's a big steamer," said Frank. "Here, let me steer past her," and he took the helm to guide the "Marvel" around the great puffing monster.

Both were going in the same direction, and when first seen the steamer was some three miles ahead. But in a little while the "Marvel" was abreast of her and shoving ahead.

The steamboat was the fastest one on the river, having distanced every one that dared to race with her. Passengers along the river would wait for her on account of her reputation for speed, and congratulate themselves on their good fortune if they secured passage on board of her. Judge of the dismay of her captain and crew when they saw the "Marvel" leaving her behind! Glasses were brought to bear, and men and women wondered what strange thing it was that thus outstripped the fastest steamboat on the river.

But Frank had little time to waste on river craft of any kind. He was bent on securing the immense fortune that lay somewhere in the thick mud of Red River. So he pushed on, enjoying the wild, picturesque scenery that was continuously changing like a grand panorama on either side of him.

At St. Louis he stopped just long enough to run up into the city to see an old friend. Then he resumed the journey, determined to make no other stops between there and the Crescent City.

On the way down he overtook two steamboats racing, each doing her best to beat the other. It was mad, dangerous business, and often ended in explosion of boilers, terrible destruction of life and property.

"I'll show them that they are both slow old tubs," he said, and, taking charge, he sent the "Marvel" skimming over the water like a thing of life, leaving the two roaring, belching steamers far behind.

The passengers of both steamboats laughed at the joke, and begged the captains to give up the race, which they did in mutual disgust.

"I'd give my whole cargo to know what craft that is," growled the disquieted captain of one of the steamers, as he gazed through a spy-glass after the "Marvel."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE "MARVEL" IN NEW ORLEANS—FRANK AND THE GOVERNOR.

As they moved down the great river, the change of climate was noticeable in a marked degree. When they left Chicago not a bud was visible. Now, in two days' time, they were gazing at the green foliage of the trees on either bank, and listening to the twitter of the birds. It seemed like going to sleep in a hard, cold, unromantic world, and waking up in Fairyland.

On, on they went with wonderful speed, directly south—toward the land of the orange and magnolia. The air was laden with the perfume of flowers, and all nature seemed aglow with budding life. Memphis was passed, and then numerous little towns on both sides flitted

by in rapid succession, till at last the historic city of Vicksburg loomed up in the distance.

Frank gazed at the memorable spots where some of the most gigantic operations of the late war had been carried on, and thought of the heroes, in blue and gray, who had perished there in the carnage of battle. He felt like stopping there and going over the battle-fields, but knew that he would have no time to do so. The sooner he got to work in his search for the treasure the better it would be for him.

Vicksburg was passed.

People on the bluffs, overlooking the river, wondered what manner of craft the "Marvel" was, and saw it pass down-stream out of sight almost as quickly as a bird on the wing could have flown.

"Such was the speed of the "Marvel" that, in three days from the time it left Joliet, it touched New Orleans.

Hundreds of vessels were moored to the docks, and it looked for some time as if Frank would not be able to find a suitable place to land.

At last he saw a chance to slip in between two huge steamboats, and did so.

"What kind of a boat is that?" the captain of one of the steamboats asked.

"Oh, it's a little dug-out," replied Frank, good-naturedly, "but she's the fastest on the river."

"That thing! I guess not."

"I guess so," returned Frank.

"Why, that tug out there can show her a clean pair of heels!" cried the captain.

"No, she can't, either."

"I'll bet a \$100 on it."

"Show your money," said Frank, drawing his purse, and shaking it at the steamboat man.

The captain was plucky.

He knew the tug was the fastest one in port, and so did not hesitate to back her against anything.

In ten minutes the tug backed out into the stream for a race, and the "Marvel" followed. At a signal both started. Ere he had gone two hundred yards the captain of the tug stopped in sheer disgust.

"I give it up," he said. "That little thing lays over anything in the water."

The steamboat man was all broke up. He didn't mind the loss of the money so much as the grand laugh that came tumbling down on him.

"What the deuce is it, anyhow?" he asked.

"Oh, it's nothing but a little dug-out," said Frank, "which greenhorns don't understand at first sight."

The captain winced and turned away, leaving the young inventor severely alone. Frank was the richer by \$100, which he divided equally between Barney and Pomp.

"Both of you stay on board now till I come back," he said to them, as he sprang ashore.

He knew that he could rely on them, and so he set out to find a first-class carriage in which to ride up to the governor's mansion. It was not difficult to find such a vehicle as he wanted, and so, in a little while, he was speeding on his way to the governor's residence.

When he arrived at the mansion, he found that the governor was engaged on important business. The secretary told him to call again the next day.

"Take my card in, and let the governor say when he will see me," said Frank, handing his card to the young man.

"Are you acquainted with the governor?" the young man asked.

"No—never saw him in my life," replied Frank. "But I have come 2,000 miles to see him at his request, and so don't feel like hanging around two or three days."

The surprised young man looked at the card, and recognized the name of the famous inventor. Mortified at his mistake, the young man carried the card in to Governor Lyle, who promptly told him to show the gentleman into his private office.

Frank was scarcely seated in the governor's

private office, ere the governor himself entered, and asked:

"Are you Mr. Reade?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr.," was our hero's reply. "Here is a letter from my father, which he requested me to hand to you," and he gave the governor the letter his father had intrusted to him.

Governor Lyle tore open the letter and hastily glanced over its contents.

"Ah! I've heard of you before, Mr. Reade!" he exclaimed. "Your father has thrown his mantle over your shoulders, and says that you have come prepared to embark in the enterprise about which I wrote to him."

"Yes, sir. I have built a boat especially adapted for the purpose mentioned in your letter."

"I am glad to hear that. But do you realize the dangers of the undertaking?"

"I don't know that I do, sir; but I am prepared for whatever danger may arise."

"Good! Keep the matter a profound secret while you are here. I will have a man here in a few days who will pilot you to the spot where the treasure was lost."

"Ah! That will greatly simplify matters," said Frank. "If I can get in the neighborhood of the treasure, I will soon be able to find it."

"That's the way to talk about it, my young friend. Do you know, I have faith in you?"

"I am glad to hear you say so, governor," said Frank. "I can assure you that I have faith in myself."

"Ah, that's the main point. If one's faith in himself is strong he can do anything. If one believes he can do a thing, it's half done already."

"That's my idea, too," added our hero, laughing pleasantly.

"It's a good one. So you have your plans all ready, have you?"

"Yes, sir. My boat is in charge of my two assistants, now down near the foot of Canal street. I would like to have you take a sail on her."

"Thanks. I shall be at leisure this evening. A moonlight sail on the water would be very pleasant, I should think."

"Oh, yes. The air here is balmy—delicious. Three days ago I saw ice and snow on the river-banks as we came down."

"Indeed! It hardly seems credible," remarked the governor.

"This sudden change of climate seems like a dream to me," Frank said. "It will take me some time to get used to it."

The governor then asked him a number of questions in regard to his plans, and was pleased with his answers.

That evening the governor, with his wife and daughter, took a sail on the "Marvel" over the broad bosom of the great river. They were utterly amazed at the speed of the boat and the silent motions of its machinery.

"It's a perfect little gem!" exclaimed the governor's daughter, who became very enthusiastic in her praise of all she saw on board the "Marvel." "Why, the cabin is like a lady's parlor."

"I am glad you like it, Miss Lyle," Frank said, blushing somewhat at her unstinted praise. "I did my best to make it complete in every part. It is the fastest boat ever launched in any part of the world."

Then the young inventor related to her and her mother his adventures in Mexico with the air boats two years before. Both of them had heard of that wonderful invention, and asked him many questions in regard to it.

When the governor and his family landed they thanked him for the pleasure he had given them, and went away in their carriage, leaving a very pleasing impression behind them.

"They are the nicest people I ever saw," said Frank, as the carriage rattled away. "I shall be sure and be on hand to-morrow at the hour they asked me to call."

Several days were spent in social enjoyment, during which time our hero took Miss Lyle and two other young ladies on an excursion down the river a distance of more than fifty miles.



On the fifth day the governor sent a messenger for our hero.

Frank lost no time in responding in person.

As he entered the governor's office, he found there a middle-aged man, whose face indicated strong individuality.

"This is Mr. Jack Leslie, Mr. Reade," said the governor, rising and introducing our hero to the stranger, after shaking hands with him. "He was with the party the night the treasure was dropped overboard in Red River."

Frank shook hands with Leslie and looked him full in the face.

The ex-Confederate returned his gaze for a moment, as he held his hand, and said:

"I am glad to see you, sir. The governor has been telling me that you have a wonderful boat on the river here."

"Thanks, sir. Yes. I have a wonderful boat, which I built expressly for this business. You are to go with me, are you not?"

"Yes; the governor has asked me to go," was the reply.

"Then we ought to get away before our object is suspected by any one."

"Yes. That's what I think, too."

"Well, why can't we leave to-night or to-morrow?"

"To-morrow," said Leslie. "I will be ready to go. Have you any arms on board?"

"Yes; enough for a dozen men."

"That's good. We may need 'em. Bad lot up there on Red River."

After an hour's conversation with the governor, Frank and Leslie left to go and take a look at the "Marvel."

## CHAPTER VI.

FRANK AND THE OLD SOLDIER—ON THE GROUND.

The young inventor took the ex-Confederate on board, and showed him everything about it.

Then he gave him a specimen of the speed of the, "Marvel," which almost took his breath away.

"She beats anything ever seen on the water!" exclaimed Leslie, in unfeigned admiration.

"Yes," said Frank. "We have speed and protection. We can turn her into a little floating fortress, which nothing but cannon can get away with, and that is an arm that is not used except in time of war."

"Why, how is that?" Leslie asked in astonishment.

"Just stand further over this way," said Frank, taking him by the arm and pulling him further away from the side of the boat. Then he gave Pomp the signal to hoist the steel covering, and the faithful black seized the crank and began to turn it vigorously.

The sides flew up and closed overhead with a sudden snap that startled the surprised Southerner.

He saw where the protection from bullets came in, and was lost in admiration.

"Why, blast my two eyes!" he exclaimed, "She's an out and out iron-clad!"

"Yes," said Frank, laughing, "you are right. No rifle-bullet can reach us here, and we have many little port-holes which we can fire through! But I don't think any one will fire on us if we do nothing to provoke hostility."

"There's where you are mistaken," said Leslie. "There are many people living around there who think that because they fought in the Southern army, and lost everything, they have a right to the treasure that lies concealed in the bottom of the river. They know that several attempts to recover it have been made, and they have done all they could to raise it themselves. If they find out that a Northern man is after it, they will be particularly aggressive, and if they don't try to wipe you out, it is because they choose to wait till you have recovered the treasure and thus enable them to capture it."

"I have thought of all that," said Frank, "and am glad to know that I have not underrated the danger. Do you know the people up there?"

"Some of them."

"They know you?"

"Oh, yes. They would be very bitter toward me if they knew I was trying to show you just where the treasure lay."

"So I suppose. But you are not afraid of them?"

"Me!" and the bronze-faced old soldier seemed surprised at the question, as he looked the young inventor in the eye. "I am afraid of nothing."

Frank saw before him one of the many thousands of soldiers who made the conquest of Lee so difficult a few years before—a man who was not afraid to face death in any shape.

"Then we will be all right," said our hero. "We will start at sunrise."

That night the two men called on the governor to receive final instructions in regard to their duties. The governor gave them commissions that showed them to be in the service of the state, and authorized them to call on the sheriffs of the state for assistance whenever and wherever needed.

Everything being thus arranged, they went back to the "Marvel," and slept on board that night.

Just as the sun was rising in the east the "Marvel" pulled out into the river, and started up stream. Frank was so anxious to reach the field of operations so soon, that he lost no time in getting there. He sent the "Marvel" going at full speed, and kept it up through the day and night, without a single stoppage.

Leslie showed him Red River when they reached the mouth of that stream, and the "Marvel" was guided into it.

He found the waters very muddy and of a dull reddish color. It was a winding, tortuous stream, running in almost every direction, full of snags, and, altogether, one of the most dangerous streams to navigate in America.

"More old steamboats lie sunk in the mud of this river," said Leslie, "than in any other river in the United States."

"So I've heard. It's full of snags, I see," said Frank.

"Yes; they are all of logs and fallen trees brought down by great freshets. It's full of alligators, turtles, snakes and cat-fish."

"Do you think you can find the spot where the treasure was sunk?" Frank asked.

"Well, I can come pretty near to it. It was on a dark night. We were crossing the river. The current carried us down some little distance, and then, as we thought we could not possibly escape capture, we silently threw every keg overboard. They were so heavy that they went right to the bottom like lumps of lead. Two hours later we were captured, but the treasure was at the bottom of the river."

"You can come within a few hundred yards of the exact locality, then?"

"Yes; I think I can."

It was late in the afternoon when Leslie sprang up and gazed from shore to shore, as if in surprise.

"Why, blame me if we ain't almost there now!" he exclaimed.

"How do you know?"

"Why, there's a place where I camped two weeks," and he pointed to an opening through the trees, where a view of a double log hut could be had. "I used to fish there every day, until the advance of the Yankees compelled us to move."

"How far is it to the other place, then?"

"Not more than ten miles or so."

"Then keep a good look-out, for we will soon be there."

In another half hour they came to a sharp bend in the river.

"Ah! here we are!" said Leslie; "and there's a camp-fire on the right over there."

"Who are the campers, think you?" asked Frank.

"Don't know. May be men on a camp hunt, or watching for a prize."

At a signal from Frank Pomp turned the wheel that sent up the steel covering, and, thus incased, they moved on slowly, till Leslie said he believed they were almost over the spot where the kegs of gold were thrown overboard.

"Throw out the anchor, Barney," said Frank.

Barney let drop the anchor through the well or aperture in the rear of the cabin, and down, down it went, until it rested in the soft mud at the bottom of the river.

The "Marvel" swung round with the current, and then remained stationary.

Ten minutes later a small skiff, with two men in it, having rifles with them, set out from the left bank and rapidly approached them.

"Leave me to talk to them," said Frank to Leslie. "You get in the cabin and listen to what they say."

Leslie entered the little cabin, and sat down out of sight of the men in the skiff.

"Hello!" cried one of the strangers, as the skiff came almost alongside.

"Hello!" returned Frank.

"What're you bound, mister?"

"Up the river."

"Don't stop hyer, then?"

"Yes, we'll stop here to rest a bit."

"What kinder boat is that?"

"It's a little pleasure-boat."

"What makes her go?"

"Oh, that's a secret."

They looked at each other a moment as if puzzled, and then one said:

"Wal, we don't want yer secret."

"I didn't suppose you did," returned Frank; "yet you asked what it was."

"Whose boat is it?"

"Governor Lyle's."

"Gosh!" gasped one of the men, "ther guv'nor is up to it agin."

"Yes," returned the other, with a terrible frown on his face. "Let's go back."

Without uttering another word the men in the skiff rowed away, and Frank turned to don his diving-suit.

## CHAPTER VII.

AT THE BOTTOM OF RED RIVER.

As Frank stood up in the diving-suit, with its electric light apparatus on the breast, he looked like some demon of another world. He would have waited till the next morning but for an almost irresistible desire to find out just what he had to contend with under the water. Not to have gone down and made some sort of examination would have left him to dream all night of terrible obstacles and unheard-of dangers.

Barney and Pomp had been instructed how to work the diving-suit, pumping in the fresh air and keeping the electric light in proper order by means of a connection with the battery that furnished the motive power of the boat.

Leslie stood by a silent but deeply interested spectator, and took in everything that was going on. He had long since come to the conclusion that Frank Reade, Jr., was one of the remarkable geniuses of the age, and had, therefore, made up his mind to learn all he could from him.

On the river bank a group of four men, two of whom had just returned from a visit to the "Marvel," were standing under a large spreading oak, engaged in earnest conversation. One of them seemed to be trying to persuade the others to do something to which they objected, by motions that could be understood by those on the boat.

"They don't know what to do about it," remarked Frank to Leslie.

"No. They know well enough that we are here to hunt for that treasure. Your story that this boat belongs to the Governor of Louisiana sets 'em back. If they find out that such is not the case, they will give us some trouble."

"Do you know any one of them?"

"No. I have not been up here for years. They are strangers to me."

"We must be careful not to expose ourselves to any shots. They can't hurt us as we are now."

"I reckon they don't know that, though," said Leslie.

"No. One would not suspect it, but nothing short of a cannon-ball can get through that wire netting or steel roof."

"They are watching us like hawks," remarked Leslie, after a pause of several minutes,



during which time Frank was busy arranging his diving-suit to his satisfaction.

"Oh, they can watch as much as they please. I don't object to that," said Frank, and then, turning to Pomp, he asked for the steel hook and blade, a weapon he had invented for a double purpose. It was made of steel, with a keen, pointed, two-edged blade at the end of it ten inches long. Back of the blade was a curved hook, calculated to be used in pulling anything from the bottom of the river.

Pomp gave him the steel, and then he prepared to drop through the opening, or well, in the stern of the boat.

"Now, Pomp," said he, as he stood over the well, "be sure and obey every signal promptly, for down in this muddy water one can't tell what is going to happen."

"Yes, sah," responded Pomp, rather nervously.

The electric light blazed in the breast of the diving-suit like an immense diamond. As he turned for a moment and gazed at the four men on the river-bank, they gave a start that betrayed their infinite amazement. They had never seen an electric light before.

"Here goes," said Frank, and the next moment he disappeared through the well into the muddy depths below.

"De Lor' Gorrarnighty!" gasped Pomp, gazing down through the well at the bubbles that came up to the surface of the muddy water.

Down, down he went into twenty feet of water, and when he stopped he found himself standing up to his waist in soft, yielding mud.

The dingy, reddish color of the water assumed another hue under the intense glare of the electric light, and those who peered down from above could see that it was possible for objects to be seen a few feet away.

But they could have no idea of the terrible scenes that surrounded the daring young inventor the moment he landed at the bottom of the river. The mud was so soft that he hardly knew when he touched it. The current at that point was so sluggish that but little mud was carried with it, and so it settled in a soft, yielding mass that swallowed up everything that was heavy enough to sink from the surface.

"Ah!" muttered Frank to himself, as he made the discovery. "I don't wonder no one has been able to find the kegs. It has been some fifteen years or more since they were thrown overboard, and during all that time mud has been accumulating on them. I have got to probe for them, and probe deep. It's a bigger task than I thought it would be. But we'll see."

He began probing the soft mud to the depth of several feet with the steel he carried in his right hand. Everywhere he made a thrust he discovered only soft mud, which grew firmer and more solid the deeper he probed.

"It's lucky there's no rocks under this bed of mud," he said to himself, "else I might be deceived in touching them, though I might be able to distinguish between wood and stone."

He continued to probe right and left, going so far as the line would allow, moving with great difficulty through the deep mud. It was slow work, but he was endowed with wonderful patience and perseverance.

Suddenly he saw some dark object move through the reddish circle of light in front of him. What it was he could not imagine, though he knew it must be some reptile or fish. But the waters of the south-west were prolific of fish about which he knew little or nothing, and so he stopped to get another look.

For a few moments he could see nothing, and he was about to resume the work of probing. Then he felt something brush against his shoulder. In that sluggish, reddish water he could see nothing outside the circle of light in front of him, and so he partly turned to throw the light around.

What he saw made his hair stand up with horror.

Circling around him, as if seeking a favorable opportunity to pounce upon and devour him, was an immense fish of a species he had heard of, but had never seen.

It was almost as large around the body as himself, round as a log, and some seven or eight feet long, covered with scales almost as large as silver quarters. But the most remarkable feature of this strange fish was its head, or rather, mouth, which was at least three feet in length, tapering to a point not larger than the end of a man's finger. As the singular mouth opened and shut, as it did continuously, Frank could see on either side a row of as savage-looking teeth as he had ever dreamed of.

As he gazed at the horrible-looking fish he saw it snap up a two-pound catfish and tear it to pieces in an instant. Then it turned toward him again, as if contemplating the project of making a meal of him.

"Ugh! What an ugly-looking fellow!" exclaimed Frank. "It's a gar-fish, and I've never heard of them attacking people; but he looks as if he would like to eat me. Ah! there's two more as big and ugly as himself. If they attack me, they may ruin the diving-suit, and cause water to rush in on me. Great God! I would be drowned in two minutes! There! Take that, and be off with you!" and with that he gave the largest one of the gars a thrust with the steel, the sharp-pointed blade of which struck under the scales, and gave the fish a deep wound.

Quick as a flash the fish darted away, making such a commotion with its tail as to stir up a perfect cloud of mud, which enveloped him so completely as to render it impossible to see anything two inches beyond his nose.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A BATTLE FOR LIFE UNDER WATER.

For a few moments our hero was at a loss to know what to do, as he found himself enveloped in a cloud of dark reddish mud. He did not know but what the strange fish would attack him while they thus had him at a disadvantage. He was about to signal to Barney and Pomp to draw him up, when he felt himself struck on the back by a fish of some kind; and a moment later something caught the sleeve of his suit and gave it a violent jerk.

"By George!" he mentally exclaimed, "they mean to give me a tussle, I believe. If I could only see them, I would give them tit for tat. I'll move up-stream a few steps and see if the current won't carry this mud away, so I can see what I am doing."

He did move up, stepping slowly until he had gone some ten feet or more. Then he was able to see about him much better than before.

But what he saw was enough to shock men of stronger nerves than he. Huddled together in the circle of electric light was a motley group of fish and reptiles—attracted by the glare—a wriggling mass of slimy objects, large and small, such as he had never before dreamed of. He stood appalled for a few minutes, not knowing what to do. There was the horribly repulsive gar-fish, with its savage mouth and shark-like body and eyes, alongside the big-bellied mud-cat; and even the clumsy, hard shell, logger-head turtle had come to see what the electric light was.

He stood there gazing at the wonderful menagerie of reptiles and fish, wondering if he would be able to pursue his search for the sunken treasure with such unwelcome companions, when he observed a sudden commotion among them. A moment later a catfish as large as a five-year-old boy was gobbled up by a monster alligator.

"Good Lord!" gasped our hero in his suit, as the monster stopped and stared at the electric light, as if blinded by its fierce glare. "He's dangerous! He is fifteen feet long, and as big round as a barrel. I don't want to have anything to do with him. But if they draw me up, he may snap at my feet and ruin me for life. Ah! Hanged if I don't believe the light blinds him! Don't think he can see anything but the light. I can go right up to him and give him a death-blow under the forearm. If I don't, he'll give me some trouble. Ugh! what a monster he is!"

For several moments Frank was puzzled to know what to do, yet dared not move out of

the way, with a hope of avoiding the monster, lest he expose himself to attack.

The alligator was large enough and strong enough to seize and run off with him if he chose to do so.

Poising his steel blade so as to be on guard, our hero moved toward the monster, and gave him a thrust under the forearm and sent the blade up to the hook.

The attack was so sudden, and the blow so well aimed, that the alligator, blinded by the light, evidently did not know whence it came. It had the effect, however, of causing him to plunge forward with such tremendous force as to knock Frank insensible, and he fell back in the deep mud like a log.

Fortunately for him, the sudden jerk given to the line by the alligator's attack caused Barney and Pomp to think Frank had given them a signal to draw him up.

Accordingly, they pulled him up with promptness, as they considered the signal a very emphatic one. But, when they drew him up through the hole, or well, and saw that he was limp and apparently lifeless, consternation seized upon them.

"De Lor' Gorrarnighty!" gasped Pomp, as he turned him over on the deck. "He am done gone dead!"

"Howly mither av Moses!" exclaimed Barney, almost paralyzed with fear.

"Take off this diving-suit, quick!" commanded Jack Leslie, "and we'll see what the trouble is. He may need fresh air!"

Barney and Pomp sprang forward and began to unbuckle the various parts of the diving-suit, and in a couple of minutes had it entirely removed.

The moment the fresh air struck him Frank began to revive.

Leslie was puzzled to know what to make of the affair, and was about to ask a question, when an immense alligator rose to the surface, on the right side of the boat, and began lashing the water with his powerful tail in a furious manner. He glared at the monster with no little astonishment.

"Faith, an' its the Ould Nick!" exclaimed Barney, glaring at the enraged reptile.

"It's a 'gator," said Pomp, his eyes almost bulging out of his head.

"Yes, and a big one," remarked Leslie.

"Mr. Reade has had a fight with him, and given him a death-blow."

"Howly Moses!"

"Goshernighty!"

"I know the 'gator well. That fellow has been hurt, and so has Mr. Reade, and—"

"Help me up—Pomp," said Frank, in feeble tones. "I am knocked out completely."

Pomp seized the young inventor and raised him up to a sitting posture. Frank looked around, and asked:

"What's that?"

"What's what?"

"That splashing in the water."

"It's a big 'gator kicking the bucket," said Leslie.

"Eh—what?"

"A big 'gator kicking the bucket. You gave him a lick that settled him."

Frank was amazed.

He looked up at the bronzed-faced ex-Confederate, and asked:

"How know you that?"

"I have killed hundreds of the pesky things," said Leslie, "and know their habits. Look at that fellow out there. He would never make all that fuss if he was not badly hurt. He would slip away and hide himself if it was not a death-wound he has. Did he attack you?"

"Well, I can't say he did—not till I struck him, anyway. He came and stood before me. I didn't know but what he would, and so I let him have the blade under the forearm."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"That settles him, then. That is about his only vulnerable point."

"Would he have attacked me if I had left him alone?"

"Yes; they will attack anything under water. Out on land they run away from man



and take to the water. But under the water they are very bold and dangerous."

"Am youse hurted, Marse Frank?" Pomp asked.

"Guess I am, Pomp," he replied. "I feel all broke up. That fellow knocked me out at one blow."

Just then the wounded monster raised himself several feet out of the water, and uttered a growl like the hoarse bellowing of a mad bull. Barney turned pale and crossed himself several times.

"I dropped my blade and probing hook down there," said Frank, after looking around, as if in search of the weapon.

"You can find it in the morning," suggested Leslie. "Better wait till you get over the effects of the blow."

"Yes, I'll wait. Get me a drink of brandy, Pomp. I am weak."

Pomp brought him a small bottle of brandy from the supply chest in the cabin, and handed it to him, with a small glass. He took a small drink of it, and gave it back.

"Just look at him now," said Leslie, gazing at the alligator. "He gives up, and is making for the bank. He will be dead in a little while."

"He will?"

"Yes. They never die in the water if they can get to the land. He is going out to die."

The monster made his way to the right bank of the river and crawled up on the bank, uttering a hoarse, bellowing sound all the while. They listened for more than a half hour, and then the bellowing ceased. The alligator was dead.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIGHT FOR THE PRIZE.

"You have done what no other man ever did—killed an alligator under water in a hand-to-hand fight," said Jack Leslie, turning to Frank the moment the bellowing ceased.

"I don't wish to meet another one that way," replied Frank. "I don't know how he hit me, but a moment after I stuck him something worse than a thunderbolt hit me on the shoulder and head, and I saw a million stars. I never knew anything more till I found myself lying on my back on the deck here."

"We thought you had given the signal to draw you up," said Leslie, "and it's fortunate that we did so. Do you feel any pain now?"

"Yes, in my head, neck and shoulder."

"Then you had better lie down and keep quiet till you get over it. I'll look after that alligator out there and get his skin for you."

"Yes. I would like to have it to send home."

They assisted him to bed, and left him to rest and sleep.

The sun was just visible over the tree-tops, as it was sinking in the western horizon, when Frank laid down. Pomp busied himself with placing the diving-suit where it belonged.

Then he proceeded to get supper, whilst Leslie and Barney made ready to go ashore and get the alligator's skin.

Just as they were about to get into a small boat to row ashore, the four men who were encamped on the river-bank showed up at the dead alligator's side, and began skinning it.

"Hello, there!" cried Leslie. "That's our game!"

"How's that, stranger?" asked one of the men, standing over the carcass, knife in hand.

"Why, we killed it."

"Oh, I reckon not."

"But we did. One of us gave him a stab under the forearm."

"We have been watching you, and never saw you do anything of the kind."

"Do you see the cut under the left forearm?"

"Oh, that's nothing. We found it and it's ours."

A black scowl settled on Leslie's face, and a fierce light gleamed in his eyes.

"Give me a gun," he said to Pomp, in low tones.

Pomp handed him a rifle, and then he said, in a loud voice:

"It's our game. Touch it, if you dare!"

"Blast you!" growled one of the men, "do you mean to shoot us?"

"Yes, if you touch that 'gator."

The four men stood resolute, and held their rifles in readiness to fire. Barney and Pomp got out their weapons and stood by the ex-Confederate.

"Come out of that boat and we'll swing you up to a limb!" cried one of the four men.

"Don't you fellows go to making any trouble," said Leslie, "or you'll get the worst of it."

"Of course we will. Come and get your old 'gator skin."

"We are not in a hurry about it. We'll get it when we want it."

"You will, eh? Well, we are going to get it now."

"I reckon not," sneered Leslie.

One of the men told the other three to stand guard, and cover the boat with their rifles, whilst he skinned the alligator.

Then he drew a formidable-looking knife and proceeded to tackle the dead alligator.

Crack!

A rifle-shot broke the stillness of the scene, and the blade of the knife fell to the ground, broken from a bullet from the rifle in Jack Leslie's hands.

"That's a blamed good shot," said the man, coolly straightening himself up and glaring at his comrades. "Why don't you plug him?"

One of the men raised his weapon and fired at Leslie.

The bullet mashed against the wire netting, and fell into the water.

Seeing that the shot had done no harm, the other two quickly aimed and fired, and with a like result.

The four men were utterly amazed. They could not understand why their shots had not taken effect.

"Get out of that, now, or I'll plug you!" cried Leslie, in a tone of voice that was not to be misunderstood.

"Come out! Come out, you coward!"

"When I am ready I will," was the reply.

"What's the matter out there?" Frank asked from within the cabin.

"They want to claim the 'gator," said Leslie.

"Well, tell 'em take it and give us the skin."

"That's just what they won't do. They want the hide themselves."

"Well, we'll take it. That hide is ours, and we must have it at all hazards. We may as well teach these fellows a good lesson at once."

"Yes, you are right," said Leslie.

Then, turning to look again, he found that each of the four men had taken to a tree, and was peering around from behind them as if waiting for a chance to give another shot that would settle the matter at once.

Thus it became a regular siege, each side not venturing to give the other a chance to put in a blow.

Suddenly, as if by a preconcerted signal, the four men fired at Leslie, who was standing near the wire netting. He was a fair target, but the bullets could not reach him.

Quick as a flash Pomp, who was on the lookout for a good shot, fired at one of the men and brought him down with a bullet in his hip.

The man fell where he was exposed to the fire of Barney and Leslie, but they did not fire at him.

"Better take him up and go away before you all get hurt," said Leslie to them.

"Blast you! we will kill you all for this!" cried the wounded man.

The others took him up, and disappeared with him in the woods.

"That will cause 'em to be ready to shoot us every chance they get," said Leslie, after a pause.

"Dar comes some more ob dem," said Pomp, as seven more men came out of the woods and gazed at the "Marvel." They were all armed with rifles.

## CHAPTER X.

### BARNEY AND THE ALLIGATOR.

THE seven new-comers stood on the banks of the river and gazed at the "Marvel" as if struck by the novelty of its build, to say nothing of its unexpected appearance in that part of the world. The brave ex-Confederate returned their gaze in silence, and seemed trying to recall some familiar features in the party.

"Hello, there!" cried one of the seven, looking toward the boat.

"What's the matter?" Leslie asked.

"That's what we want to know," replied the other. "What did you shoot that man for?"

"For shooting at us."

"Who are you?"

"A man—a citizen of Louisiana. Who are you?"

"Well, I reckon we are the same."

"The same what?"

"Men and citizens."

"Oh, you are, eh? Hunting, I suppose?"

"Yes, we are hunting. What are you doing?"

"We are on a pleasure excursion."

"Where are you going?"

"Anywhere we please. Where are you bound?"

"Just beating about in the woods," was the reply.

"How long are you going to beat about in the woods around here?"

"As long as we think we can find any game."

"What kind of game?"

"Any kind; we ain't particular."

"I hope you'll have good luck," said Leslie.

"Thank you. Got anything to drink on board?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Wine, brandy, whisky, paregoric, and kerosene oil."

"You have a good assortment. Can't you open a bottle of whisky for us if we come on board?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because it doesn't belong to me."

"Oh! Who does it belong to?"

"Governor Lyle."

"The duce! Is he on board?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"In New Orleans."

"Is he coming up to drink it?"

"Don't know; he may."

"You won't give us a drink, then?"

"No; not to-day."

"Come ashore, and have one with us, then?"

"Thank you. I never drink anywhere else but on board."

"I say, mister!"

"Well?"

"You'll die very young. You are too smart to live to be a man."

"So! Well, now, that's strange, seeing that I am already old enough to take care of myself."

"Do you want to sell that boat?"

"Yes; for one million dollars," replied Leslie.

"I'll take it. Bring it ashore," said the spokesman of the party.

"Excuse me. Bring your money on board and take possession at once. We came up here to sell out to somebody."

There was a chuckle heard in the party, and then they were seen to turn to each other and hold a conversation in low tones.

Lying in his berth in the cabin, Frank heard every word that passed between Leslie and the men on the river-bank. His brain was busy in an attempt to solve the problem of overcoming the obstacles that were rising up around him above and below the water.

It was a question with him which was the most dangerous—the armed strangers on the river-bank, or the scaly monsters under the water.

Of the two he feared the former less. Those he could meet on something like equality. Not so with the alligators.

Suddenly he heard Pomp say to Barney:

"Barney, see dat 'gator dere?"



"Where?" Barney asked.  
 "Out dere—see dem two eyes stickin' up outen de water?"  
 "Bedad, an' is that same one av thim bloody craythers?"

"Yes—dat's er 'gator lookin' at youse."  
 "Be the powers, it's meself as'll give 'im a black oye," and with that he ran the muzzle of his revolver through one of the port-holes, took deliberate aim, and fired.

The ball cut one of the eyes of the alligator out, and the effect was startling in the extreme.

An instant after the shot a huge back body, twelve or fifteen feet in length, sprang up to the surface, roaring like a mad bull, and lashing the water into a muddy foam. The tail of the alligator is a powerful weapon for offensive and defensive purposes. Their strength is wonderful. A full-grown alligator has been known to kill an ox with a single blow with its tail.

No wonder, then, that when the monster rose to the surface, roaring like a mad bull, and lashing the water into a foam, Barney turned pale and crossed himself a dozen times in rapid succession.

Frank sprang out of bed the moment he heard the shot, and ran out on the deck of the boat. He was feeling badly all over from his collision with one of the scaly monsters, but he could not resist the temptation to get up and see the struggle of the great reptile.

"Did you kill 'im, Barney?" he asked.  
 "Bedad, it's the loivest baste I ever saw, bad cess to it."

"You hit it, didn't you?"  
 "Divil a wan o' me knows. It's a howlin' 'bloody murder' he is, though."

"Where did you hit 'im?"  
 "In the oye. Sure, an' Pomp towld me av thim."

The alligator has a habit of lying under the surface of the water, out of sight, with only its eyes exposed. They can project their eyes out of their heads the length of a man's finger, thus showing only a pair of eyes above the surface when lying in wait for prey; hence the pair Barney had shot.

In its blinded rage the big reptile ran against the "Marvel," and made it rock to and fro. Then he struck it a blow with his tail that could have been heard a half mile away.

"The saints betune us an' harrum!" exclaimed Barney, devoutly crossing himself.

"Oh, he can't do us any harm. Don't be uneasy about the boat. He may pound it as long as he pleases. Give him a bullet behind the shoulder if he exposes himself."

The half-blinded reptile tried to climb up on the "Marvel," and succeeded in getting his claws in the wire-netting, much to Frank's surprise, and pulled himself out of the water.

"Quick! Give me a rifle, Pomp!" exclaimed Frank, turning toward the faithful black.

Pomp had armed himself with a repeating Winchester, which he handed to the young inventor. Frank took the powerful weapon and thrust the muzzle through one of the port-holes, right under the left side of the reptile, and fired.

The ball went clear through him, and gave the monster such a shock as to cause him to droop, give a few spasmodic wriggles, and then drop back into the water.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE STRANGERS—A SURPRISED SHERIFF.

DURING the battle with the alligator, the men on the river-bank stood silent spectators of the scene. They were familiar with such monsters, and did not have any fear of them when beyond their reach. Yet the moment the alligator climbed upon the side of the "Marvel," they fired at him, or pretended to. But not one of them hit him. Every bullet struck against the wire netting in front of Frank's breast, and dropped into the water.

The ex-Confederate saw the whole thing, and looked hard at Frank, who returned his gaze.

"They are good shots," he said, "and can hit whatever they shoot at."

"Yet they didn't hit the alligator."

"No; they didn't want to."

"So! We know where to place them now."

"Yes. But I knew that before."

"Well, so did I, as for that."

Then turning to Pomp, Frank ordered him to proceed about preparing supper, as it was now growing twilight.

In the meantime, the alligator, having received a death-wound, made straight for the bank to die.

He crawled up out of the water, bellowing hoarsely, and lashing the bushes with his tail. The monsters die hard, and so they were compelled to endure the horrid noise for nearly an hour—till it was too dark to see the trees on either bank.

Pomp announced that supper was ready, and Frank and Leslie sat down to a sumptuous repast, the savory odors of which reached the men encamped on the river-bank. Out there they had built a fire, and were busy preparing a meal of game, which had been killed during the day.

While Frank and Leslie were at the table, four men came up to the "Marvel" in a skiff, and stopped there.

"What youse want heah?" Pomp asked.

"Say, you nigger," said the leader of the party, "you are speaking to white men."

"White trash," said Pomp, in a sneering tone.

That was a red-hot coal in a keg of powder. Such words coming from the lips of a black man set the four men wild with rage.

"You black imp of Satan!" roared the leader of the party. "I'll cut your heart out of you!"

"Shoot the scoundrel!"

"Fill him up with lead!"

"Blow up the whole thing!"

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Each man fired at Pomp, but their bullets fell harmless from the wire screen, leaving Pomp standing unharmed and grinning from ear to ear.

"Sho!" he exclaimed. "You white trash doan' know nuffin'. G'way befo' youse git hurted."

"What's all this noise about?" Frank asked, coming out of the cabin, and looking straight at the men in the skiff.

"That infernal black nigger insulted us," said the leader of the party. "He called us white trash."

"He did?"

"Yes; and we are going to peel his black hide for him."

"I guess not. You have insulted him by calling him an infernal black nigger, and thus got even with him."

"Insult a nigger! Good Lord! Are you a white man, stranger?"

"Yes; I think I am, and man enough to say that a negro is a man as well as any other human being. This black man here is my faithful friend, who carried me on his shoulders when I was a child. I am his friend now, and his quarrel is my quarrel. Now, clear out from here! Make yourselves scarce!"

"Why, blast your eyes!" gasped the leader of the party, "we can duck you, and sink your durned old boat to the bottom of the river."

"You can do nothing of the kind," said Frank, "and you had better think twice before you make any trouble. We are here on business of our own, and don't wish to have any trouble with any one. Go your way, and we will go ours."

"Say, youngster!" called out one of the men, "come ashore, and let me give you a spanking; it will do you good."

"We are well armed," said Frank, very coolly, "and well protected from bullets from any quarter. On the other hand, we can lay out every one of you in just one minute. Don't provoke us to do it."

"You talk well, young man," said the leader; "but if you come out of—"

"But I am not going to come out," interrupted Frank; "so you need not wait for me under the supposition that I am a fool. Be off with you, now!"

The men sat still and silent for several min-

utes, glaring at the young man who dared thus to talk to them and defy them to their face.

"Let's go back," the leader finally said, and a few moments later they pulled off and rowed back to the shore, where their companions were gathered around a camp-fire.

"We have got to look out for those fellows," said Frank, as they rowed away. "They are very dangerous men."

"Yes," said Leslie, "and they will seek every chance to do us a harm."

"They can't reach us here, however," remarked Frank. "We shall not expose ourselves to their bullets."

"What will you do about that 'gator skin?" Leslie asked.

"Oh, let 'em have it. It isn't worth the trouble of standing guard over it all night."

After the four men went away all hands on the "Marvel" lit their pipes, and proceeded to enjoy a quiet smoke. At ten o'clock they retired, leaving one on guard.

Early the next morning Pomp was up preparing breakfast.

He made the discovery that over a dozen men had put in an appearance during the night, and he said to Barney:

"Dem folks out dere am er gwine ter hab trouble wid Marse Frank, suah."

"Yes, an' they'll be afther havin' a funeral, too, begob!" replied Barney.

"Dat's er fac'."

When breakfast was announced Frank was still in his bed. He felt stiff and sore from his collision with the alligator the day before.

"I won't get up yet," he said. "Bring me a cup of coffee, Pomp; I feel all broke up."

Pomp brought him the coffee, and stood by till he drank it. Then he told him of the number of men who had turned up at the camp during the night.

"Well, don't bother with 'em," he said.

That day all hands lay off and watched those on shore, not caring to do anything until the young inventor was ready to go to the bottom of the river again.

Just before sunset, when Leslie had just caught a twenty-pound cat-fish through the well in the rear of the cabin, four men came alongside the "Marvel" in a skiff.

"I am the sheriff of this county," said a man in the bow of the skiff, "and have a warrant for the arrest of all four of you for shooting James Turner yesterday. Here it is."

"Oh, you are the sheriff, are you?" Frank asked.

"Yes, I am the sheriff."

"You have arrested the others for shooting at us, have you?"

"No. I have no warrant for them."

"Of course not. Do your duty—arrest me if you can."

"Do you resist?"

"Well, no. You must lay your hand on me, you know, before you can arrest me."

"We can get at you easy enough, I reckon," said the sheriff.

"See here, Mr. Sheriff, I have a document, signed by the governor of this State, which not only exempts me from arrest, except on his own order, but orders every sheriff in the State to obey my call for assistance while in the discharge of my duty. What my duty is does not concern you. Here's the governor's signature, and the official document," and he held the document close to the wire netting, so the astonished sheriff could read it.

"By the Eternal," he exclaimed, "it's genuine, boys! I know the governor's signature."

"You acknowledge it, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Very well, then. I now call upon you to disperse those men out there. If they don't go away, arrest them, for they fired on us yesterday."

"By gosh! Mr. Reade," said the dumfounded sheriff, "I can't arrest 'em; they're all armed."

"Then call on the governor for troops. There's nothing mean about me."

"Oh, I can't get 'em to go away, I reckon," the sheriff said.

"If they will not, just order me to fire on



'em, and we'll give you a lot of corpses to handle."

The sheriff returned to the camp the worst astonished man ever seen in that part of the country.

"You'll have to go away, boys," he said to them, as they stood around the camp-fire. "That young fellow has got the governor on his side, so you can't do anything with him."

"What shall we do?" one asked.

"Go off till I can say I sent you all away. When I am gone you can come back and do as you please, for all I care."

"That's it! Come, fellows," said the leader, turning to the others, "let's go into the woods, and let him settle it with that young fellow."

They followed him away into the bushes, after which the sheriff reported to Frank that he had dispersed the mob.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DOWN BELOW AGAIN—A KEO.

WHEN the sheriff reported that he had sent the men away, Leslie smiled, and said:

"They will come again. You didn't send 'em far enough."

"Oh, they have gone home. They won't trouble you any more," said the sheriff.

"If they do, they had better bring picks and spades with 'em," said Frank.

"For what?"

"To dig graves with. I am prepared for them, and the governor has exempted me from arrest, except on his own order."

"What did he do that for?"

"To check you and men like you," was the reply.

The sheriff went away, and our hero prepared to make himself comfortable for the rest of the day and evening.

Everything was quiet that night, and when morning dawned the woods seemed to be deserted.

"Maybe they did go home," said Frank to Leslie.

"Not a bit of it. They will be around again soon."

"Well, they can't do us any harm, and so we won't think anything more about them. I feel well enough to go down again to-day."

About noon he put on his diving-suit and prepared to go down. He had to take another hook and blade-probe in place of the one he had lost. That he might not run the risk of losing that one, he made it fast to his wrist by means of a strong cord.

"Be careful about the signals," said he, as he stood on the brink of the well. "A mistake might cost me my life."

Then he made the descent, and in another minute or two he was down in the soft mud at the bottom of the river again.

The first thing his feet touched was the steel hook and blade he had lost in his encounter with the alligator. He picked it up and used it, letting the other one hang by the cord that attached it to his wrist.

That he might not make any mistake in giving a thorough search of the locality, he probed the mud in a circle of thirty feet diameter, without touching any hard substance of any kind.

The electric light enabled him to see any number of fishes of all sizes. It seemed to blind them when they came within its circle, and he was thus able to touch some of them.

Just as he was about to give the signal to be drawn up, an immense cat-fish came up almost against the electric light, and stopped as if bewildered by its glare.

"You are a big fellow," said Frank, to himself, "but I am not afraid to tackle you for all that."

He raised his hook and pushed it under his head. Then giving it a sudden jerk, he buried it deep in the side of the fish, just under the left side-fin.

The cat-fish made a plunge that jerked him completely off his balance, and he fell over in the mud. But he held on to the hook. The

hook held on to the fish, and the fish made desperate efforts to get rid of it.

When he was jerked over the line was violently jerked, and Barney and Pomp began pulling away as if for dear life.

In another minute he was being drawn up; yet he held on to the hook. Every plunge the fish made Barney and Pomp felt it, and they began to think an alligator was swallowing him.

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Barney, huge drops of perspiration streaming down his face, "the bloody baste is atin' 'im."

"Up wid' 'im, Barney!" cried Pomp, making desperate haste. "De Lor' Gorramitey!"

They pulled him up through the well, and seeing that he was struggling with something on his hook, Leslie seized hold of it and held on with all his might.

The fish came near jerking him into the water, though, and if Barney had not given his assistance it is doubtful which would have gotten the best of the struggle.

Not till they saw what it was on the hook could they disabuse their minds of the idea that it was an alligator.

"Goshermighty!" exclaimed Pomp, when he saw the monster cat-fish, which looked as if it would weigh one hundred pounds, "dat am er whopper, suah!"

"Thru' for you, Pomp," cried Barney, pulling the struggling fish away from the well. "Bedad, an' we'll have a faste av fish for a wake."

Frank removed the upper part of his suit, and told them about his encounter with the fish.

"I never saw any alligators about," he added. "Don't think they are around much to-day. I want to move from here about forty or fifty feet. There's nothing but mud below here."

"Then let's move further over that way," suggested Leslie, pointing toward the left bank of the river. "Somehow I have the impression that we are a little too far over this way."

"Very well. We'll move over there, then," and he ordered Barney and Pomp to raise the anchor at once. They did so, whilst he took the helm and started the electric battery going.

In a little while the "Marvel" had been moved over in the direction indicated, and the anchor dropped again.

"Ah! our friends have turned up again," said Leslie, as he saw something like a dozen men come out of the bushes and stand at the water's edge.

"Well, let 'em alone. Don't say anything to them," said Frank, as he readjusted his diving-suit to go down again.

Dropping through the well, he again went down into the soft, yielding mud some eighteen or twenty feet, and at once began probing.

Hundreds of fishes came swimming around the circle of the electric light, but he only kept his eye open for alligators. They were the only foes he had to fear below the water.

Suddenly his probe struck against a hard substance of some kind deep down in the mud. He stopped and probed more carefully, ascertaining that it was wood.

"Ah! That means something," he said, moving over to the spot, and standing on the hard substance. "It may be a keg," and then he went down on his knees and tried to get at it.

Whatever it was, it lay deep down in the mud, as it was almost beyond his reach.

In moving about his foot struck against another.

He turned, and found that the mud had banked up and over something, he could not tell what. But he began wriggling his hand down, down through the mud, which was firmer the deeper he went.

In his eagerness he lost sight of the fishes around him. He stirred up the mud to such a degree that the electric light was powerless to aid him. Then he had to depend altogether on the sense of touch.

Suddenly he caught hold of the side of the hard substance, and a cry of joy escaped him, for he had hold of a keg!

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FRANK AND LESLIE REJOICE OVER GOOD LUCK.

It was several moments ere our hero could master his emotions after making the discovery that he had found a keg buried deep down in the mud of the river. That could have but one significance. A keg in that out-of-the-way place meant just what he was looking for, and the fact that he had dropped on to the treasure so soon caused him to almost lose his head.

After resting awhile he began probing about, and discovered several more solid substances scattered about in the mud.

"They are all here," he said to himself, "and I may as well go up and tell Leslie and the others about it."

He gave the signal to be drawn up, and Barney and Pomp at once began raising him. Nothing had occurred to excite their suspicions, and so they were all calm and self-possessed when he threw off the upper part of the suit and stood face to face with them.

Leslie, however, saw that something had occurred, and asked:

"Did you see any alligators?"

"No, and I am glad I did not."

"Did you see any big fish?"

"Yes, plenty of them, and also a number of very heavy kegs."

"Eh—what?"

"I found a lot of heavy kegs in the mud down there," said Frank, trying to keep as cool as possible; "much too heavy for me to lift."

"Whoop!" yelled the ex-Confederate, springing to his feet in the wild exuberance of his joy. "You have found it!"

Barney and Pomp gave vent to their joy in wild whoops and sundry ejaculations.

"Keep quiet, will you!" exclaimed Frank.

"Those people out there will hear you."

It was with the utmost difficulty that Pomp and Barney's enthusiasm could be suppressed.

"It's too good luck to keep very quiet under," said Leslie, wringing Frank's hand.

"We ought to open a bottle of wine over it, and have a little jollification."

"I am perfectly willing to do that," said Frank, "as it's very dry work down under the water."

"Well, that sounds very strange, doesn't it?"

"Yes, but it's the truth, nevertheless," said our hero.

"Oh, I can very readily understand that," remarked Leslie.

"Bring out two bottles of wine, Pomp," ordered Frank, "and we'll drink them here where those fellows can see us."

Pomp brought out the two bottles, a broad grin illuminating his good-natured black face, and proceeded to open them. As they drank the sparkling wine Barney could not refrain from giving a whoop that woke up the echoes of the forest.

Frank did not rebuke him, and the next moment Pomp broke loose in a wild whoop, followed a moment later by Leslie himself.

It was contagious.

"Hip-hip—hurrah! hurrah!" cried Frank, holding his glass above his head, his face beaming with the excitement of the moment.

The others responded with a will, and the party of men on the river-bank wondered what had happened to make them so happy all of a sudden.

The bottles were quickly emptied, and then the work of raising the kegs was begun.

Frank had provided everything in anticipation of success. He knew that if the heavy kegs were found it would require no little power to raise them from the bottom of the river; hence he had constructed a small derrick, to be run by power from the electric battery, for that very purpose.

They at once began to place the small derrick in position over the well.

The moment the men on shore saw the derrick they knew what it meant.

An intense excitement at once took possession of them. They talked and gesticulated wildly, and in a few minutes four of them set off in the skiff to row out to the "Marvel."



"Now, we don't want those fellows around here," said Frank, in very decided tones.

"No," said Leslie. "We may as well warn them off at once."

"Yes—get your guns, Barney and Pomp."

All four armed themselves as quickly as possible, and stood as if ready to fire on the intruders.

"Halt, there!" cried Frank, very sternly. "If you come any nearer we will fire on you!"

"The deuce!" exclaimed one of the men in the skiff. "What does this mean?"

"It means that you will be fired on if you come any nearer to us," was Frank's reply.

"What right have you to—"

"By the right of might and the governor's authority."

"What's the governor got to do with it? This river belongs to the people, and—"

"This particular spot belongs to us just now," said Frank, "and we are not going to argue about it. If you want to fight, we are ready to accommodate you."

The man in the boat consulted with his comrades a few moments, and then said:

"Our intentions are peaceful, and we only—"

"So are ours, and that's why we warn you off. We don't want you, and won't have you, so be off now without any more words about it."

The men immediately rowed back to the shore, and held a consultation with those in the bushes there.

In the meantime Frank and Leslie came to an understanding as to what course was to be pursued towards the strangers in the woods.

"There are more than a dozen of them there now," said Frank, "and when the news spreads that we have found the treasure they will come in scores. They haven't been able to find it themselves, and now may seek to wrench it from us as soon as we get it on board."

"Yes," said Leslie, "I think that is their game. But I don't see how they can work it, as they can neither board us nor reach us with their bullets."

"That is true; but if we don't be firm with 'em now, they will give us no end of trouble in a few days."

"You are right, Mr. Reade," said the ex-Confederate; "and I will do all in my power to aid you."

"I know you will. The governor said you were true as steel, and that's the kind of a man I like. Now, while Barney and Pomp are working the derrick, you must stand guard and keep off those fellows. If you have to fire on them, don't kill any one; just give one of them a slight wound, to let 'em know we mean business."

"I understand you, Mr. Reade. But if they go to firing on us, I am going to wipe out some of them and make short work of them."

"Yes; if they begin to fight, give 'em fight in earnest."

"Oh, you must not expect to get away from here without a hard fight. They are fully determined to have some of that gold, or die trying to get it."

"Well, some of 'em will have to die, then, for they won't get a dollar of it," and as he spoke, our hero began to close up his diving suit again.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SUCCESS AND PERIL HAND IN HAND.

WHEN he was ready to go down again, Frank saw that everything connected with the little derrick was in working order. He gave Barney and Pomp final instructions, and then went down.

Ere he was well on his feet in the mud, he was confronted by an immense alligator, who showed a very decided disposition to make a meal of him.

"Ugh! what an old rascal!" exclaimed Frank, with a shudder, as he glared at the monster. "If I don't attack him, he will try to gobble me up. He is strong enough to carry me off. I'll give him the blade under the fore-arm, and see what effect it will have on him."

Frank moved a little to the right, still keep-

ing the light shining in the monster's eyes, and made a thrust at him with the sharp, steel-pointed blade.

It cut him to the quick, and caused him to dash away like lightning.

"I guess that will make you keep away," thought Frank.

But in another moment he saw the monster return and show fight.

He was a big one, and our hero began to wish himself back upon the deck of the "Marvel," as he did not half like the looks of the reptile.

Suddenly the alligator made an attempt to seize him in his immense jaws. Frank quickly sprang aside, or rather bent his body, so as to avoid the snap, and gave him another hard thrust under the fore-arm with the steel blade.

That time he seemed to have given him his quietus, for the monster darted away, and was seen no more.

But in less than a minute another one came, not more than half as large as the other one. This smaller one was disposed to be very aggressive, however, and made several attempts to seize him in his powerful jaws.

"Hang your ugly carcass!" hissed Frank, throwing himself on his guard; "you are bound to not let me alone. I'll give you a taste of cold steel that'll make you sick."

He gave him a thrust with the steel probe; but the point struck against the shell-like part of the reptile's breast, and glanced off.

The alligator then made a rush at him with open jaws, and for a moment our hero thought he was lost. But he saved himself by dropping on his knees, and thus letting the monster pass over him. Then he sprang to his feet, and turned round so as to throw the rays of the electric light on the alligator, to avoid being attacked in the rear.

Fortunately for him, the alligator turned at the same time and presented his side.

Quick as a flash Frank gave him a terrific stab under the fore-arm, and sent him away with a mortal wound.

"That settles him," said our hero, as the alligator disappeared in the muddy element. "If no more of them comes, I'll soon have one of these kegs up on deck," and seizing the hooks that hung down from the derrick, he proceeded to adjust them to one of the kegs.

But ere he could get at the keg he found he had to scratch away a good deal of mud that had settled on it during the years it had remained under the water. So he used both hands for two or three minutes in removing the accumulations of time. When he at last had reached the bare keg, he adjusted the hooks to both ends, and gave the signal for Barney to draw him up.

Just as he commenced to ascend, four huge alligators came rushing toward him—two with their hideous jaws distended as if to devour him at one mouthful.

The attack was so sudden, so unexpected, that for a moment he was almost paralyzed with terror. He was suspended between the bottom and the surface of the river, and could not turn from side to side as well as if he had been on his feet.

A yell escaped him as he saw them make a rush for him, and he thrust out the steel probe with a blind hope of warding them off.

It seemed as if a divine Providence intervened to save him. Without aiming to do so, he struck the steel blade against the eye of the foremost and largest alligator and cut it out.

The intolerable pain caused the monster to turn and seize the fore-arm of the other reptile in his powerful jaws, and the result was a terrible battle under the water, during which Frank was drawn up through the well to the deck of the "Marvel."

He quickly threw off the upper part of the diving suit, and presented a face to the ex-Confederate of such extreme pallor as to startle him.

"My God, Reade!" exclaimed Leslie, "what's the matter? What has happened?"

"I have made the narrowest escape of my

life," said Frank, sitting down to rest and regain his composure.

"What has happened— Ah!"

Ere Frank could reply to the eager question, two enormous alligators came to the surface of the water alongside the "Marvel," engaged in a desperate battle with each other.

That was what drew the ejaculation from Leslie, for he partly understood the peril to which Frank had been exposed.

Frank turned and looked at the hideous monsters, as they lashed the water with their tails, and tried to tear each other to pieces with their frightful-looking teeth, and said:

"They are fighting over me—both wanted to eat me."

"Reade, this is awful!" exclaimed Leslie, with a shudder.

"Yes. It's as much as my life is worth to go down there again. I saw four just as I was coming up. They are attracted to the spot by something or other."

"Is there no way to get rid of them?"

"I don't know. I must think."

The alligators fought savagely for several minutes, during which time nearly a dozen showed up within fifty yards of the spot.

Barney and Pomp got their terrible Winchesters, and went to work shooting at them. Every shot under the fore-arm got the best of them, and in a little while a half dozen of them had been sent away with an ounce of lead in them that would soon cause them to crawl out on land to die.

So great was the excitement over the presence of the alligators that Frank forgot all about the keg he had fastened the hooks to before coming up. The great peril to which he had been exposed had driven everything else out of his mind.

"Did you ever see so many alligators about in one place before?" he asked of Leslie.

"Yes, often. It is nothing unusual to see a dozen or more of them in one place."

"I am glad to hear that. I was afraid something had drawn them here, and that we could not get rid of them."

"You will have to get rid of them before you can do anything," said Leslie. "By the way, did you get at the kegs before the gators disturbed you?"

"Yes, and hang me if I didn't forget all about it. There's a keg on the hooks now. Pull it up, and let's see what's in it."

Leslie didn't wait for Barney or Pomp to respond to the order, but sprang forward himself, and began to turn the lifting-wheel.

After about a dozen revolutions, he felt a tightening of the chains, as if the hooks were attached to some very heavy weight below. Then it seemed as if they were fastened to some immovable object, for he strained with all his might, and it looked as if the chains would snap in twain.

Suddenly he felt something give way, and then half the pressure was removed.

"Ah! It was stuck fast in the mud!" exclaimed Frank, standing eagerly by, and peering down through the muddy water below the well.

"It's coming up now," said Lester.

"Stand by, Barney and Pomp!" ordered Frank, "to take it in when it comes up."

The two faithful fellows, trembling with excitement, stood by, ready to receive the keg when it came up.

"Call that a keg av goold!" exclaimed Barney, as a big black lump of mud made its appearance above the surface of the water. "Be the powers, it's old mud!"

"Lay hold!" cried Frank, and both seized and pulled it around, and held it over the deck till Leslie reversed the wheel and let it down.

So much mud was clinging to it that it did not even have the shape of a keg. Leslie eyed it curiously, as if in doubt as to its being one of the kegs he had assisted in throwing into the river on a dark night many years before.

"It don't look like a keg," he remarked, as he walked around it two or three times.

"No, nor do I know that it is one," said Frank; "but I took it to be one, and am going to see what it is. Clean away the mud, Pomp—quick!"



Pomp used a small shovel, while Barney stood by and dashed pails of water over it.

"Howly Moses!" yelled Barney, after a minute or two. "It's a keg!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### CHEEK.

BARNEY'S exclamation was heard by the men on the river-bank, who had been close observers of everything on board the "Marvel" all the morning. It acted on them like magic, as an intense excitement was noticeable among them immediately after. They almost ran down into the water in their eagerness to see and hear more.

Then a wild yell burst from them—a yell like that which was so often heard on the battle-fields during the war for the Union—and one of their number cried out:

"Have you found it, mister?"

"Say nothing in reply," cautioned Frank.

Barney threw bucket after bucket of water on the keg, till all the mud on it was washed off.

"That's one of 'em!" exclaimed Leslie. "I know the keg. You've struck it, Reade! Your fortune is made. Give me your hand, old fellow!"

The two men clasped hands, and shook for a couple of minutes.

Their faces beamed with the light of a splendid triumph, and they could not repress a shout of joy as they stood up and faced each other.

Without waiting for orders, Barney seized a hatchet and cut the hoops on the keg, and the next moment there was a rattling of gold coin on the deck of the "Marvel."

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, leaping almost to the steel-covered roof.

"Whoop!" followed Pomp, springing up and executing a double shuffle. "Oh, golly, I see so glad!"

"Ireland forever!"

Pomp darted into the cabin, to return a moment later with his banjo, which he began twanging at a fearful rate.

"Whoop! Go it, Pomp, yer black naygur!" cried Barney, throwing off his coat. "Give us a best."

Then he began one of his wild Irish dances, and kept it up till the perspiration rolled down his face in huge drops.

Frank was so overjoyed that he forgot all about his terrible peril under the water an hour before, and laughed till he almost cried.

Then he brought out two more bottles of wine and opened them, and he and Leslie drank together twice ere Barney and Pomp caught sight of the bottles.

"Hi dar! I'm dry, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, suddenly stopping the music of the banjo.

"Beggorra, I'm a desert av dry dust, so I am!" put in Barney.

"Take a swim in that, then," said Frank, handing him the bottle.

"Whoop! More power to yez!"

"Open it, Barney—open it quick, an' gimme some."

"Bedad, yez don't swim in me pond, me bye."

"Here's one for you, Pomp," said Frank, giving Pomp one also. "Don't try to drink it all at once, now, remember."

"Say, stranger, let us have a few bottles," said a man on shore.

Frank made no reply, but turned to Leslie, and said:

"I guess those fellows will carry the news all over the country around here, and we'll soon have the woods full of people, all anxious to see and hear about this gold."

"I don't think they will say anything about it till they find out they can't get hold of it themselves."

"You think they will try to get it, do you?"

"Yes. They would kill us in cold blood for just one keg. You see, the most of those fellows were bushwhackers during the war, and don't mind killing a man any more than they would in shooting a dog."

"Well, they won't get a chance to do us any harm. I don't think, for we are safe enough in this little floating fort. Now, Pomp, you and

Barney may take up all this money and put it in pails, and set it in the cabin."

Barney and Pomp set to work gathering up the coins and dropping them into a couple of pails. The chinking of the pieces could be distinctly heard by those on shore, and the sound set them wild with excitement.

They called repeatedly to Frank, but could get no answer out of him. At last four of them entered the skiff and rowed out towards the "Marvel."

"Halt!" cried Leslie, when they were about half way from the shore. "Come nearer, and I'll fire on you!"

"But we have something to say," said the leader.

"No; you have nothing to say to us. You are strangers, and have nothing to do with us. Go back, and keep away."

"But we have something to do with that money," said the man. "We were soldiers in the Confederate army, and got no pay during the last year of the war, besides losing everything after the surrender. That money belonged to the Confederates. The government has no claim on it, so we demand a part of it for ourselves."

"By all that's holy!" exclaimed Frank, "that fellow's gall surpasses anything I ever heard of. I say, stranger!"

"Well?" answered the man in the skiff.

"What's your cheek made of?"

"Good sound flesh and blood," was the reply.

"Indeed! I wouldn't have thought so. You will live a thousand years. Such cheek can never yield to the ravages of time."

"Come out of that box and give me a chance at your cheek, and I—"

"Oh, excuse me!" cried Frank, laughing. "I couldn't think of pitting my cheek against yours; I wouldn't have a ghost of a show."

Frank's laugh was peculiarly irritating to the rascals, and they were on the point of firing at him several times. But they had found out that in his shelter they could do him no harm, and so they refrained from doing so.

"You won't give us a show at the money, then?"

"Not."

"Then you must take the consequences of your rashness, for you will never get away with it."

"Oh, that's all right, poor fool," and Frank again laughed.

The skiff went back to the shore, and a consultation took place among the men in the bushes there.

In the meantime, Frank was trying to devise some way to get rid of the alligators. He had found the treasure, and was sure of being able to get every keg of it, if the alligators would let him. He was also sure that if one of the monsters once got him in his jaws, it would be the last of him, as they were powerful enough to crush him at a single snap.

Suddenly he turned and slapped Leslie on the shoulder, exclaiming:

"Ah! I have a plan to get rid of the rascals!"

"What is it?"

"Blow 'em up."

"How blow 'em up?"

"With powder and electricity."

Leslie gazed hard at the men on shore, and shook his head.

"I don't see how you can do it," he said. "They have rifles, and are all dead shots."

"The deuce! I mean the alligators!" exclaimed Frank.

"Oh, I thought you meant those fellows out there! Yes—blow 'em up. But how?"

"Tie a carcass to a wire, and let the alligators gather around it. Then blow up the whole lot. It will be a day or so before any more would gather there again."

"By George! that's the very thing! Can you do that?"

"Yes, if I can get a carcass of a goat, calf, pig, or deer. Ah! there's a deer now! Quick—my rifle, Barney!"

On the opposite bank from the men stood a

deer gazing across the river. He had probably come down the river for a drink of water.

Frank seized the rifle which Barney handed him, and fired. The deer sprang up several feet, and then fell on the river-bank in the agonies of death.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A DOSE OF DYNAMITE.

It was a splendid shot that stretched the innocent deer dead on the river-bank. Even the men on the other side had to give vent to expressions of admiration of the skill displayed.

"There's a carcass for my purpose," said Frank, as he handed his rifle back to Pomp.

"Yes," said Leslie, "but how can you get it here? It is useless to us where it is."

"So it is; but I guess we can get it."

"But how?"

"Why, by going after it."

"But they will cover it with their rifles over there."

"Well, we can cover them with our rifles," returned Frank.

"So we can; but we can't afford to lose one, you know."

"No, that's so," and he looked hard at the bronzed face of the ex-Confederate in profound silence for a minute or two, and asked:

"Do you think they would fire on any one of us if we were to go out there after that deer?"

"I do. They are a desperate set of fellows, who have not the fear of the law before their eyes."

"Then we won't take any chances at all," remarked Frank.

"Perhaps we can get a couple of them to go for it," suggested Leslie.

"Never! I will ask no favors of them. I will pull up the anchor and run the "Marvel" over there after it before I would do that. I believe that would be the best thing to do, anyhow."

"But you might not find this exact spot again."

"Oh, I can plant a buoy," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly.

"You are a man of infinite resources, Mr. Reade," said Leslie. "I perceive that you can get through any and all obstructions that encumber your path. You have the right idea. The sooner you put it into effect the better."

"Just what I think. Here, Barney, get me a jug—one of those you brought on board at New Orleans, and—no, a jug won't do. A bullet would destroy it, and my buoy would go to the bottom instantaneously. Get one of those small boxes from under my bed, Pomp. That will do admirably."

Pomp got the box and attached a wire to it. To the other end of the wire he tied a twenty-five-pound bag of shot.

"That will be heavy enough to hold the box as a buoy," said Frank. "Now drop the weight down through the well, Pomp."

"Dar it goes," said Pomp, letting the bag of shot fall into the water. It fell to the bottom, leaving at least ten feet of slack and the box on board.

"Now draw up the anchor."

Barney and Pomp drew up the anchor of the "Marvel," and the boat immediately began to float with the current. The box was drawn through the well, and a moment later was floating on the surface of the water.

Then Frank set the electric battery going. The "Marvel" shot through the water like a duck, to the utter amazement of those on the river-bank. They had never seen it in motion, and were at a loss to understand how it was moved.

As if to take a little exercise, the "Marvel" made a dash up the river a distance of a half mile, and then turned and came back at full speed.

"Great Jerusalem!" exclaimed one of the men on shore; "the devil is in it as sure as fate!"

"What moves her, anyhow?"

"The things bewitched!"

"Blast my eyes!"

"Jes' look at that!"



"Dern my hide!"

And many were the queer remarks heard by those on board the "Marvel." But our hero paid no attention to them.

Returning, the "Marvel" shot over to the spot where the carcass of the deer was lying close by the water's edge.

No time was lost in getting the game on board, after which they hastened to return to the buoy they had left in the middle of the river.

There they dropped anchor again, and drew in the box and bag of shot.

"Now, Pomp, open that deer and take out its entrails, and throw them overboard. That will draw the alligators. By the time you are ready, I will have a little surprise on hand for the ugly varmint."

Pomp went to work as ordered, and soon had a dozen hungry alligators fighting over the fresh meat that was thrown into the water.

"Why do you draw 'em to you that way?" Leslie asked.

"To kill 'em," was the reply of the young inventor.

Frank took a small can of dynamite from his ammunition chest, connected it with two wires, and then placed it inside the carcass.

"Now sew it up, Pomp, with strong twine," he said, "while I attach these wires to the battery. I'll make 'em so sick that every alligator in Red River will vote to emigrate."

The can of dynamite was sewed up in the carcass. A stout cord, of the size of an ordinary clothes-line, was then tied around the neck, and the whole tossed overboard.

It was allowed to float about one hundred feet below the "Marvel," at which distance the cord held it steady.

"Now look out for fun," said Frank, as a half-dozen huge alligators rose to the surface and rushed upon the carcass. Scarcely had they laid hold on the luscious prize than a dozen more, big and little, joined in and began a terrific struggle for a bite.

"Now for it!" exclaimed Frank, turning a tremendous electric current on the wires that connected with the can of dynamite in the carcass the monsters were tearing to pieces.

The next moment a column of water as large as a hoghead was sent up in the air, filled with alligators and pieces of alligators, followed by a report that was heard five miles away.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, "do yer moind that now! Be the powers, the devils is done for!"

"Hi dar! Dem 'gators hab done gone an' got it dis time, suah!" exclaimed Pomp, his eyes almost popping out of his head.

"Bedad, it's blowed 'em to glory, the bloody ould snakes!"

"I think those that are not killed," said Frank to the ex-Confederate, "will set out at once for a trip to the Gulf."

"Yes, I should think so, too," was the reply. "But look there! Nearly every one was killed!"

"Yes—there go four, making off as though the Old Nick was after them!"

The water was full of dead and dying alligators, and a few who were able to navigate were making the best speed in getting away from the spot. They didn't stop to look back, but got away without so much as showing any desire to finish their repast.

The men on the river-bank were taken as much by surprise by the explosion as were the alligators. They were not dreaming of anything of the kind, and were not prepared for it. Hence they stood and gazed in open-mouthed wonder at the awful destruction they had so unexpectedly witnessed.

"Now that the coast is clear," said Frank, "I will put on the diving suit and go down again. I guess there won't be any more alligators around to-day. You must be careful and not let any of those kegs fall back into the water, as I would be driven through the mud to China if one were to drop on my head."

"I will see that they are handled with care," said Leslie, as he assisted Frank to don the suit.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### RAISING THE TREASURE.

ONCE more down at the muddy bottom, Frank found himself among the mounds that indicated something solid underneath. But the commotion caused by the explosion of dynamite had muddied the water to such an extent that he could not see his hand at a distance of a foot beyond the electric light.

At first he thought of ascending to wait for the sluggish current to carry off the floating mud; but then he imagined it would be so much time wasted, as he might be able to feel about and get up one or two of the kegs during the time that would otherwise be lost.

So he set to work to feeling around with hands and feet. It was slow work in mud over three feet deep. But he was patient as well as determined. In a little while he struck several hard lumps under his feet, and then he stooped and began feeling for the kegs. He was compelled to scrape the mud away, so as to get the hooks of the derrick-chain fastened securely to them. They had laid so long under the water, and were so very heavy, that the mud had caked, or rather packed, down quite hard on them.

But he at last got the hooks fastened to one of them, and gave the signal to those above to pull it up. A moment later he had the satisfaction of feeling the chain quiver under the strain of pulling the keg out of its bed of mud. It slowly swung round a moment or two, and then began to ascend.

"That's one more," said Frank, as he turned and began feeling around with his feet for another keg.

He had little trouble in finding several more, for they had all been thrown overboard in a great hurry, and were but very little scattered.

Leslie received the keg and rolled it to one side, ordering Barney to clean the mud off of it, and Pomp to lower the hooks again to our hero.

By the time the hooks reached him Frank had another keg ready, and in a couple of minutes he gave the signal.

"Up with it, boys," said Leslie. "It's the best paying mud in the world. We'll never see the like again."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp, turning vigorously. "Dem kegs doan' grow in de mud eb'ry day."

"Thru' for you, Pomp," said Barney, dashing a pail of water over the keg in his charge. "Bedad, but it's foin' fishin' we're after havin'."

"Yes," put in Leslie. "I would not object to go fishing every day if we could have such luck as this."

"Begob, but the 'gators would be after wantin' a few kegs."

"So they would, but we are rather too much for 'em, I'm thinking."

"Dat's er fac'. Dem 'gators am done got all dey wants."

"There's another signal!" exclaimed Leslie, as Frank gave the line a jerk. "Up with it as fast as you can. The 'gators may be back soon, or more come to see what all the fuss is about."

Barney and Pomp lost no time in pulling up another keg, which Leslie received and rolled to the further side of the deck. The hooks were immediately lowered again, and the cleaning process went on as before.

In the course of a couple of hours, nearly a dozen kegs were brought up, after which Frank signaled to them to draw him up.

"There's something wrong!" exclaimed Leslie. "Draw him up quick!" and he flew to Pomp's assistance and helped to pull him up to the deck.

"What's the matter?" Leslie asked, as soon as the head-piece of the diving-suit was removed.

"The mud," said Frank. "It's so thick down there where the kegs were pulled up that I felt very uncomfortable in it."

"Doesn't the current carry any of it away?" Leslie asked.

"It's so slow that it takes time to move it. Give me a glass of brandy, Pomp. I must brace up on something."

Pomp brought the bottle from the medicine-chest, and Frank took a hearty pull at it.

"It's hard work down there," he said, passing the bottle to Leslie, "and very lonesome. You can't eat or drink anything—though there's plenty of water around—nor talk to any one."

"And all the time afraid that an alligator will pounce down on you," remarked Leslie.

"Yes; but I didn't bother much about 'em this time. They are pretty well scared off by this time, I guess."

During this conversation Frank noticed that several more men had joined the party on the river-bank, and were intently watching the work on board the "Marvel."

"Every man out there is armed with a rifle," he remarked to Leslie.

"Yes. They mean mischief, if they can get a chance to make any."

"Well, we must not let 'em provoke us, if we can avoid it, as we have the advantage, you know."

"You are right; yet, when I see men hanging around, ready to shoot me down and rob me, I don't feel inclined to have much consideration for them."

"Surely they don't deserve any; but still, if we should be so unfortunate as to kill one of those fellows, they would raise the whole county on us, and give us no end of trouble."

"True; and for that reason we had better not have anything to do with them."

"Hello, there!" came from the shore in a strong, manly voice.

"Well?" answered Frank.

"You've struck it, have you?"

"Struck what?"

"Those kegs."

"We've got a few kegs on board."

"What's in 'em?"

"Mud," was the reply.

"Are you going to divide any of it?"

"Yes."

"Whom with?"

"Governor Lyle and the State of Louisiana."

"How about the people of Louisiana?"

"Oh, the governor will look out for them. He is their agent."

"Hang the agent. We don't want any agent. Part of that money belongs to us, who fought for it."

"I think I know how you feel about it, my friend," said Frank, "but I have no discretion in the matter. You must see the governor about your claim. He may look at it in the same way."

"The governor be hanged! We don't want nothing to do with him. Right is right, and that's all there is to it. We want you to divide."

"I am sorry, but the governor sent me here to do a certain thing, and you can bet all you are worth that I am going to do it!"

"You won't divide, then?"

"No."

"Nor leave a few kegs in the river there?"

"Not one if I can find it."

A profound silence followed, during which time both sides stared at each other as if trying to read their thoughts. Then the strangers turned and disappeared in the bushes without uttering another word.

"What does that mean?" Frank asked, turning to Leslie.

"It means mischief," was the reply. "They have arranged a plan of some kind, and came back to see if they would be finally refused by you. They will try to surprise us in some way."

"Well, as long as they don't bring a cannon against us, I don't fear them," said Frank.

"Nor do I. But we must be on our guard against a surprise of some kind."

"What can they do?"

"I don't know. They may come down on us with axes and cut their way in. Such a big sum of money will tempt men to any desperate measure."

Frank looked hard at the ex-Confederate, and then around at the wire netting.

"A strong man could cut his way in with an ax," he remarked, as if communing with his own thoughts.

"Just what I think," said Leslie.

"I have an electric light, which can be placed



anywhere on board," said Frank, after a pause. "I had better rig it up at once, so as to be prepared for a night attack."

"Yes; it would be a good idea, I think. I don't know that they will attack us, but it's best to be prepared in case they do."

Frank went to work arranging a powerful electric light to be placed on the roof of the "Marvel," and in an hour's time had it ready for use.

"They can't get within two hundred yards of us now," he said, as he gave the finishing touch to the work, "without exposing themselves to us."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MIDNIGHT ATTACK.

AFTER arranging the light for the roof of the "Marvel," Frank again put on the diving-suit, and went down in search of more kegs.

The mud had settled considerably, and he was able to get up four more kegs before the sun went down behind the tree-tops on the west bank of the river.

Then he came up, and throwing off the diving-suit, said:

"I will rest till to-morrow. The mud has not settled enough yet to suit me."

"You have made a fortune to-day," said Leslie, "and can afford to rest."

"Yes. I am well pleased with the day's work," remarked Frank.

"You ought to be, I am sure, as you have nearly a half million dollars on board."

"I wonder where those fellows have gone? They have vanished altogether."

"Oh, they will show up again. You may be sure you are not rid of them yet. I only wish we were."

Frank went about the "Marvel," to make sure that everything was in readiness for any emergency that might arise.

"One thing we must make sure of in case they attempt to come alongside of us," he said.

"What's that?"

"Pull up the anchor and keep out of their way. They can do us no harm if we do that."

"Yes; you are right about that. It doesn't take more than a minute to raise the anchor, you know."

"That's so. We must keep a lookout, and not let 'em approach too near to us. How long before you can have supper ready, Pomp?"

"In a leetle while, sah."

"I am very hungry."

Pomp hurried himself, and in a very short time had a splendid supper on the table.

The sun went down, and myriads of stars came out and decked the evening sky as with diamonds. Frank lit a cigar and leaned back in a chair for a quiet smoke. Leslie and the others soon lit their pipes and kept him company. All were feeling good over the results of the day's work. Frank had made a fortune; and the others knew that they would not be left when the job was finished.

Conversation was brisk and pleasant till bedtime, at which time Frank ignited the electric light on the roof of the boat, flooding the river and forest with a brilliant glare.

"Now, Barney," he said to the Irishman, "you must stand guard till two o'clock, and then call Pomp."

"No; call me," said Leslie. "Pomp will be needed to get breakfast."

"Thanks," said Frank. "You must not let any one come alongside of us. If you see any craft of any kind approaching, wake us up, and raise the anchor at once."

"Yis, sor," said Barney.

They retired, and in a few minutes Barney was the only one on board who was not asleep.

Nothing came to disturb the quietness of the first watch, and at two o'clock he called up the ex-Confederate, who promptly took his place as watch.

Barney went to his berth, and in a few minutes his snore was heard all over the boat.

Leslie quietly lit his pipe and paced back and forth on the deck, and kept his eyes roving up and down the river in search of any moving ob-

ject. The truth was, he was ill at ease and strangely suspicious.

Suddenly he heard the stroke of oars up the river, and he turned and gazed in that direction.

A minute or two later he saw a half-dozen skiffs filled with men coming rapidly down the river.

"Ah! They are coming! Here, Reade, up and raise the anchor! Barney! Pomp! Up with you, quick!"

All three sprang out of bed in a jiffy; and Barney and Pomp rushed forward to raise the anchor.

Frank touched the electric knob that controlled the battery, and the boat began to move slowly as soon as the anchor swung clear of the mud.

"Now let 'em come on," said our hero. "Get your rifles, boys, and stand ready to use them. Don't fire, though, till I give the word."

The rifles were gotten out and placed where they could be reached in a moment, if necessary. Then Frank set the "Marvel" in slow motion, so as not to be observed by the men in the skiffs.

On they came, with men in the bow of each skiff armed with axes. The "Marvel" kept going at almost the same pace, till they had gone some two or three hundred yards below the spot where the treasures had been found.

Then they made the discovery that the "Marvel" was moving away from them, and for a moment they were dumfounded.

They were so angry over the discovery that some twenty or more of them leveled their rifles and fired a volley full at the wire netting of the "Marvel."

The bullets fell into the water, mashed against the netting.

A moment later Frank turned to his three comrades and said:

"That settles it; give 'em a volley, and let's see how they will like it."

Four flashes burst from the stern of the "Marvel," and four men in the foremost skiff sank down in the agony of death.

"Give 'em another!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

Four more were laid low. Every man was clearly exposed under the glare of the electric light, and thus made a good target.

"Give 'em another!"

"Cr-r-r-ack!"

Four more shots rang out again as if drawn out by one long discharge, and four more were hit.

Then a howl of rage and terror burst from the deluded villains. They sent a few shots back in reply, and then seized the oars and tried to pull away from the dangerous foe.

"Surrender!" cried Frank, in a loud tone, of voice, "or you are all dead rascals."

They made no reply, but bent to the oars in a desperate endeavor to escape to the shore.

To give them a more terrifying scare, Frank turned the "Marvel" and made a dash for the skiff. In a moment he was alongside of it.

A man sprang up with an ax in his hand, and prepared to strike a blow. Barney thrust the muzzle of his rifle through a port-hole and shot him dead. He fell into the water and disappeared, taking the ax with him.

"Don't shoot—don't shoot!" cried the other two men in the skiff, throwing down their oars and dropping on their knees.

"You ought to be shot—the last one of you!" exclaimed Frank.

"Don't shoot—don't shoot!" came from the others, pulling for the bank with all their might.

"Clear out, now, or I'll not leave one of you alive!" cried Leslie. "You fellows brought this on yourselves, and ought to get a little more of it!"

"Don't shoot—don't shoot!" was all the reply they made.

"We surrender!" cried several men in one of the skiffs, fearing they were about to be fired on.

"Oh, we don't want any prisoners," said Frank. "Clear out and keep away. You are not worth the powder and lead we have wasted on you. If you show yourselves about here again we'll riddle you with bullets!"

In a few moments more the first skiff struck the bank, and the men dashed off into the woods.

The others followed in quick order, and in a few minutes more not one was in sight.

"Give 'em a send-off!" cried Frank. "Hip, hip, hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" burst forth Barney, Pomp and Leslie, making the welkin ring with their cheers.

As if enraged by the cheers, the baffled wretches turned and fired a volley at the "Marvel," and then slunk away into the depth of the forest.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### AN ALLIGATOR SEIZES FRANK IN HIS JAWS.

THE punishment of the would-be robbers was something appalling in its severity. Over a dozen of them were killed and wounded, while not one on board the "Marvel" was hurt.

"It's awful," said Frank, shaking his head mournfully, "but it could not be helped. They brought it on themselves. We had warned them several times."

"Yes," said Leslie; "you did all you could to avoid a difficulty with them. So far as I am concerned, the country is better off in the death of those who were killed."

"I am glad to hear you say that, as I would be sorry if a good man had been killed."

"I reckon you won't find any good men going round trying to rob people as those fellows did."

"Oh, well, they may have labored under the impression that they had some right to a part of the treasure, you know. People sometimes get queer ideas in their heads."

"Yes, I know. Well, you could do nothing less than defend yourself when attacked. I guess we are about at the old place again. That tree out there seems to be about as it was before we pulled up anchor."

The "Marvel" was now back at her old place again, and Pomp dropped the anchor overboard. The boat swung slowly round with the current and settled down, as before the presence of the robbers was discovered.

"This looks like the old place," said Frank, looking from shore to shore.

"Yes. I don't think we can be as much as ten feet out of the way, if that much."

"Well, I can soon find out when I get down in the soft mud," said Frank. "I only hope the pesky alligators have not returned. Do you know I have a horror of those huge reptiles?"

"Well, one had better have," remarked Leslie. "They are not such things that one would want to make pets of. In the water they have the strength of a full-grown ox."

"I should say they have. One of them could soon make mincemeat of me, if once he got me in his immense jaws. The trouble of it is the water is so muddy that I cannot see 'em well enough to have a fair show in defending myself against 'em."

"That's so. But I don't think you will have any around here for a day or two. That explosion gave 'em such a scare that they will keep shy of us."

"Well, the sooner I go to work the better it will be."

Pomp and Barney prepared an early breakfast, and then Frank began to arrange his diving-suit for another descent into the muddy depths.

Everything being in readiness, he cautioned Pomp and Barney to be very careful in watching for and obeying his signals, and then dropped through the hole, or well, and was out of sight in a moment.

He hadn't more than touched the bottom, ere he found out that he was not in the same spot where he had already secured several kegs of gold. Instead of the soft, yielding mud of the former place, he found himself standing on



a log or fallen tree. He knew it was a tree, for he could feel the limbs and the bark.

Standing on the log, he probed right and left with the steel blade and hook, for the kegs. But he was disappointed, as not a keg could he find.

Suddenly he felt himself caught from behind by something that lifted him up and carried him off, as if to run away with him.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped. "That must be an alligator! I am lost if I can't make him drop me!"

In a wild hope that he would strike him in a vulnerable part, Frank thrust the steel-pointed blade over his shoulder with all his might. He felt it grate against the hard, shell-like surface of an alligator's head.

This discovery that it really was one of the terrible reptiles that had him sent a thrill of horror through him, and he thrust again and again.

Suddenly the steel entered the reptile's eye, and then the daring young inventor was sent whizzing through the water, and fell in a bed of soft mud, whence he was jerked by Pomp and Barney, who thought he had signaled to them to jerk him up.

It was well for him that he was pulled up as quickly as he was, as the water came pouring in on him through the rents made in the diving-suit by the alligator's teeth.

Pomp saw the rents in the suit the moment Frank appeared above the water.

"De Lor' Gorrarnighty!" he exclaimed, his eyes almost bulging out of his head. "Dem 'gators hab done gone an' bit 'im, suah!"

"Bedad, but it's aloive yit he is," said Barney, as Frank made great haste to get the suit off.

They both assisted him to get it off, and in a minute or two he stood before them, white as a sheet, and wet to the skin.

"What has happened?" Leslie asked.

"Why, I've been seized by an alligator, and nearly eaten up," said Frank. "Another minute more and I would have been gone for good."

"How did it happen?"

"He came up behind me. I never saw him at all. Luckily his jaws only closed on the suit, and I'm afraid he has ruined that."

They both examined the diving-suit, and found that the reptile's teeth had torn it in several places. Frank shuddered as he saw the imminent peril he had been in, and said:

"I don't know that the treasure is worth the risk of getting it."

Leslie looked hard at him, and remarked:

"I never knew a man to get away from an alligator before, after the thing had got him in his mouth. It's the narrowest escape I ever heard of. If you have escaped so well, you will pull through. I am a believer in good luck, Mr. Reade."

"Well, so am I. But I have always believed that good luck and good judgment generally went together."

"So they do, but I've seen the best sort of good luck where there was no judgment at all."

"So have I," said Frank, laughing. "I sometimes think that I am the luckiest fellow in the world, even where there is no judgment exercised. But I am afraid of these pesky alligators. That fellow gave me a scare I can't get over—at least not to-day. Why, the rascal actually took me up and carried me some twenty or thirty feet ere I managed to hurt him in some way. Then he dropped me and made off. Suppose I had not struck him somewhere in a tender spot, and a half dozen more had come up for a bite, where would I have been five, or even two, minutes later?"

"In their bellies," quietly answered Leslie.

"Yes, and I am afraid I'll get there yet," and the brave young inventor looked very grave as he spoke.

"Well, I don't think it will be so bad as that," said Leslie, who for the first time saw Frank growing discouraged. "You have been through greater perils which you did not appreciate so much, perhaps."

"Maybe you are right," remarked Frank.

"I know that I have been through a great many dangers, but never had a ten-foot alligator pick me up and walk off with me before."

"Maybe the alligator is swearing at his hard luck in losing his dinner," suggested Leslie.

Frank burst out laughing.

"That settles it!" he cried. "I got the best of the game, and ought to be congratulating myself that he *did* lose his dinner. Well, well, I'll mend this suit and go down again."

But it was not an easy task to mend the torn suit, and the greater part of the day was spent at work on it. When it was finished, Frank looked up at the sun, and saw that it was declining below the tree-tops, so he deferred any further visits to the muddy depths till the next day.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A SOUTHERN NIGHT STORM.

THAT evening, as the sun went down, huge black clouds loomed up in the south-eastern horizon. Low, muttering thunder and keen, forked streaks of lightning warned our hero that a storm was brewing.

"Do you have hurricanes in this section of country?" Frank asked of Leslie.

"Yes, sometimes," replied Leslie, looking uneasily at the great black cloud that was boiling up from the south-east.

"Are they very severe?"

"Sometimes."

"What do you think of that cloud coming up out there?"

"It means a storm, I should think."

"Well, I should think so, too," said Frank; "but does it mean a hurricane, tornado, or cyclone?"

"Hanged if I know," said Leslie. "It may be any one of those you mention, and then it may not; I can't tell. You had better be prepared for the worst, though."

"Well, now, tell me what the worst is, and then I may be able to provide against it."

"The worst is the wind. It may blow strong enough to blow whole trees across the river."

"And that means it may be strong enough to blow us out of the river?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't be uneasy about that. If the bottom of this river holds good we'll be all right. That little anchor down there takes a good grip when it catches hold."

Frank then went to work looking to everything that could be called into use during a severe gale, and saw that everything was all right.

"Now let her come," he said, lighting his pipe and settling down for a quiet smoke; "I'm ready for all the storms that Red River can boast of."

Just then a blinding flash of lightning, accompanied by a deafening clap of thunder, startled them.

A tree on the right bank was struck and shivered into splinters.

"By George!" exclaimed Frank. "I don't want any of those things around here. I've got electricity enough on board now. There's so much steel about this boat that we are liable to get a shock that will toss us overboard to the alligators."

"De Lor' Gorrarnighty, Marse Frank!" exclaimed Pomp, springing to his feet. "Le's go to de lan'."

"What? Go ashore and get a bullet into your black carcass?"

"Oh, dem folks hab done gone hide dere-selbs," said Pomp.

"Don't you go fool yourself that way, Pomp. Those fellows are out there yet, and they mean to have revenge for our work this morning."

"But dey is scared ob de lightnin', too, Marse Frank," persisted Pomp.

"Don't you believe that, Pomp; they are used to it, and like it."

Pomp knew it would be of no use to urge him any further, and so he sat down again in a state of complete demoralization.

Barney was but little less troubled than Pomp, but when he saw how cool Frank and Leslie

were, he regained his confidence in a measure, and began to laugh at the darkey's fears.

"Bedad," he said, "it's so scart ye are that it's white yez are turning."

"Go 'way now, Barney," said Pomp, giving him a savage look. "Fust t'ing youse knows, I'll butt youse clean outen de boat."

"Sure, and wudn't yez ask me consint till that, eh?" he responded.

"What fo' I want youse consent, you Irish-er?" growled Pomp.

"Bedad, it's mesilf as wud have a wurrud ter say about it."

"Come, now," called Frank to both of them. "This is a happy family, remember, and we don't want any quarrelling on board."

"There, ye naygur!" exclaimed Barney, "didn't I tell yez ter shut yer mouth?"

"No, youse didn't! Slet your ole mouf."

"Hanged if I don't turn the hose-pipe on both of you," said Frank, looking very determined, as he rose to his feet, "if you don't stop that jawing."

Both saw that he was in earnest, and so kept quiet.

Frank resumed his seat, and listened to the thunder and the roar of the wind as it rushed through the forest. It was equal to the sea in an angry mood. It seemed as if whole trees were being torn up and hurled through space, only to come in contact with some resisting force.

The wind grew stronger and fiercer every minute, and the boat pulled and tugged at the anchor as if it would fain break loose and go scudding away. Then the rain came down in torrents, and it seemed for a time as if the very flood-gates of heaven were opened, so heavy was the fall of water.

"By George, if the river rises many feet, I shall not be able to go down till it falls again."

"I was thinking about that," said Leslie.

"But these sudden storms seldom last long; and, though a heavy rainfall comes with 'em, they don't do much more than add to the muddy condition of the river."

"Goodness knows, it's muddy enough now!"

"Yes—but it will be a little more muddy to-morrow."

"Well, I suppose I can't help myself, so I will take it as philosophically as I can," said our hero. "I was once in a storm like this when I was up nearly a mile above the earth in a flying machine. Barney and Pomp were both terribly demoralized, but we came through it all right."

"Of course you did. You'll always pull through because you *believe* you will, and that helps a man out wonderfully, you know."

"Yes, I know it does. Gracious! how the wind does blow! If the anchor-chain breaks, we'll go scudding at a fearful rate."

But the anchor-chain did not break. On the contrary, it held on tenaciously, showing that Frank's confidence in it was not misplaced.

By and by it lulled, and only the dying roar of the storm-king was heard in the depth of the great forest. But as the wind died out, the greater came the volume of water.

The rain fell in torrents; and, as it continued to pour, Frank's face elongated. He foresaw that he would have an increased volume of water to contend with on the following day.

"How long before the river will begin to rise from the effect of this rain?" he asked of Leslie.

"Not before this time to-morrow night."

"What!"

"Yes. In a flat, level country like this the water does not rush down into the streams as in mountainous countries. It is more slow and steady."

"Ah! then I can have a chance to-morrow."

"Yes, certainly, if the 'gators will let you."

"Oh, I'll go down if I never come up again," said Frank very determinedly.

The storm at last subsided. The rain ceased very suddenly, and ten minutes later the stars were shining brightly.

"Ah! I'm glad it's over. If it had continued all night that way the whole country would have been flooded."

"Yes; but these storms come with great



force, and soon pass away," remarked Leslie. "Now we may turn in and sleep."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE PETRIFIED KEGS—BARNEY'S FEARS.

EARLY the next day all on board the "Marvel" were up and partaking of a hot breakfast.

The diving-suit had been put in good repair, and laid by ready to be donned as soon as Frank was prepared.

Frank waited nearly an hour after eating his breakfast ere he put on the suit. He took more than his usual pains to see that everything was all right. Then he had the anchor raised, and the "Marvel" moved up some thirty or forty feet, feeling sure that he was that much too far down-stream to strike the kegs he was in search of.

Throwing out the anchor, the boat swung round in position with the current. Then, after giving final instructions to Barney and Pomp, he went down into the muddy water again.

It was easy for him to see that the rain had added more color to the water, and that he would have more trouble than before in moving about. Still he went bravely to work, and probed right and left till he struck a keg.

He instinctively knew it was a keg, and so he signaled for the derrick-hooks to be sent down. By the time they reached him he had felt of the keg with his hands, and in doing so found half a dozen more lying in a heap together.

But those in the heap had a different feeling from the others. They felt more like stone than wood; but the shape was that of kegs, and so he sent them up, one by one, and then began a search for more.

Round and round he went probing in every direction, but nothing but soft-yielding mud could he find.

"Hanged if I don't believe I've gathered the whole crop," he muttered, as he stopped and looked around him. "There's no more around here, at any rate," and then he signaled to them in the boat to draw him up.

In five minutes he was on the deck of the "Marvel" taking off the diving suit. Leslie was assisting him.

"Do you know," said the ex-Confederate, "that I think we have got all that were thrown overboard on that eventful night?"

"Do you really?"

"Yes. I've counted them, and I don't think there's another one left."

"Well, I hunted all around, and couldn't find another one."

Barney was busy dashing pails of water over the kegs, and washing the mud off of them.

Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Howly mither o' Moses! phat is it?"

"What's the matter now, Barney?" Frank asked.

"Shure, an' ther keg is stone!"

"What!" exclaimed both Frank and Leslie, darting forward.

"Shure, an' it's a stone keg!" said Barney, devoutly crossing himself, as he stood away from the keg he had been washing.

Leslie went up and laid his hand on the little keg, and felt of it very carefully.

"It's petrified!" he suddenly exclaimed.

"What!—petrified!" and Frank sprang forward to feel of the keg for himself.

He was greatly excited, and remembered that he had once, down under the water, thought some of the kegs felt more like stone than wood.

"You are right," he finally said, looking up at Leslie, "and I am rather glad it's so. I'd rather have that petrified keg as a curiosity than the contents of it."

"So would I!" exclaimed Leslie. "It is, perhaps, the only one in the whole world."

"How are the others? If one is petrified the others should be also."

"Bedad, they're all aloike," said Barney, pointing to the half-dozen kegs that had been found in a pile together.

"What a prize!" exclaimed Frank, his face lighting up with joy. "I wouldn't take ten thousand dollars apiece for them. You shall have one yourself, Leslie."

"Thanks. You are kind. They're the greatest curiosity in the world."

"Yes. We'll have to have 'em drilled through in one end to get the gold out, and that will make their history all the more interesting."

"Of course it will," and all four looked at them with great curiosity. Barney wanted to know how it happened, and Frank had to explain to him that the action of certain properties in the water and mud on the wooden kegs had turned them to stone.

"Hundreds of human bodies have been found turned to stone, after being ten or twenty years in the ground," he said, by way of explanation; "and out in Nevada whole trees, that had been blown down for many years, have been found petrified."

"The devil is in it," said Barney, crossing himself again.

"Oh, no," said Frank, "it's the work of nature, and whatever nature does is right, you know."

"I don't," said Barney, determined not to be convinced. "Sure, an' don't the priest read from the good Book, 'dust to dust?' Bedad, an' it's stone, is it?"

Frank and Leslie laughed till their sides ached at the peculiar theology of the Irishman. But their levity did not shake Barney in the least, he still holding to the opinion that the "devil was in it."

"Well, the devil isn't in the money, anyhow, Barney," said Leslie. "You won't refuse a share of that, will you?"

"Sure, an' there's plinty in the others," he replied, at which Frank and Leslie roared again.

"All right, Barney," Frank said, when he was through with his laugh. "I'll pay you out of the other kegs."

That seemed to relieve Barney, and he smiled a smile as broad as any that Pomp could show.

"Take down the derrick! Close up the well! Bring out four bottles of champagne, and let's have a hurrah over the last keg!"

Frank's enthusiasm was catching.

Barney and Pomp flew around, and soon had the glasses and bottles ready. One bottle for each.

"Whoop! hooray! whack!" yelled Barney, overjoyed at the idea of having a whole bottle of champagne to himself.

"What's the matter wid youse, Barney? Done gone an' lost your nut?"

"Whoop! Dhry up, ye naygur! Sure, if yez had a sowl undher yer black hide it's shoutin' yer'd be, too!"

"Bress de Lor, I'se done got a soul, honey, which am er gwine ter lib in glory, whar de streets am pabed wid gold!"

"Whoop! Hyer ther naygur now? Do yez moind him now?"

"Oh, yes, Pomp is right," said Leslie, smiling. "All good niggers and Irishmen will go to glory together."

"Begob, thin, there'll be foighting up there on St. Patrick's day," said Barney, pouring himself a glass of the sparkling wine. As it foamed and sparkled in the glass, Barney quickly gulped it down.

But the next moment the effervescing liquid began to run out of the bottle and fell on the deck. Barney was puzzled for a moment, but only for a moment, and then clapped the bottle to his mouth and held it there.

"Let her bile, Barney!" cried Pomp, as he grinned from ear to ear at the Irishman's attempt to save his share of the generous wine.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE MERRY-MAKERS INTERRUPTED.

THE merriment on board the "Marvel" was both hearty and enjoyable, for the four men had the right to be merry. They had made a big fortune under the most trying circumstances. Dangers on both land and water had menaced them. Stouter hearts than theirs had been known to fail in the face of even less danger. Yes, they felt that they had the right to dance and be merry.

As Barney gave them a ludicrous exhibition of how to save his effervescing wine by clapping the muzzle of the bottle to his mouth,

they roared with laughter. Pomp, having taken two or three drinks of the generous fluid, ran into the cabin and brought out his fiddle and began to tune it up.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, dancing around the deck like a jolly son of Erin that he was. "Scrape a rale ould Irish jig out av the cat-gut, an' Barney O'Shea's the bye as 'll step it, off for ye. Whoop!"

"I'se er comin', Barney!" cried happy Pomp, tuning away as if he was confident the old Irish jig was in the violin.

At last he was tuned up, and then began to draw the bow over the strings. The wine had made him feel both mellow and musical, and the way he pulled the jig out of the instrument and kept time with his right foot caused Barney to take another swallow of champagne, and then begin dancing with a whoop that awoke the echoes far and wide.

"Heah you is, Barney!" cried Pomp, playing with all his might and skill. "Whoop'er up dar, honey! Shake dem feet, chile—shake 'em up good! Hi, hi—whoop! Oh, golly, look at dat Irisher!"

The music was contagious or infectious. Frank and Leslie sprang out on the deck and began dancing with Barney.

"Och, now, Master Frank!" exclaimed Barney, "Do yez moind the step now! Jist look at that! Whoop! Shake 'em up! Whoop!"

It was a regular jolly old time on board the "Marvel" that day. Pomp would play the violin till he was dry. Then he would take another pull at the bottle, and go at it again. The perspiration stood in great beads on his face. He poured down Barney's face as he reeled off jig after jig.

"Hello, here!" cried a loud voice, and Pomp ceased playing to see who the owner of the strange voice was. The others stopped dancing, and stared at a small boat full of armed men lying alongside the "Marvel."

"You uns are havin' a good time, ain't you?" the hailing voice asked.

"Yes," said Frank, looking the man straight in the face. "We have some good stuff on board, and—"

"Give us some of it," was the blunt demand. "We don't take no man's word about liquor. We taste for ourselves."

"Oh, that's when you pay for it," said Frank. "We have none to give to strangers."

"You haven't, eh?"

"No."

"See hyer, young feller!" exclaimed the spokesman of the party, "I want you—all of you!" and he began feeling in his pockets. "I have a warrant for you uns. Jes' look at that and surrender at once, or I'll blow you all up quicker'n you can wink!"

"Oh, you have a warrant for me, have you?"

"Yes; here it is."

"Oh, I don't want to see it. You can't arrest me, for you can't get at me to lay your hands on me."

"Oh, I'll take you in your cage just as it is," said the man. "You don't surrender—eh?"

"No, not if I know myself."

"Grab her, men!"

Every man in the boat produced an iron cotton-hook, with which he proceeded to make fast to the "Marvel."

"Get away from us now, if you can," chuckled the spokesman.

"Raise the anchor, Pomp," said Frank, very coolly; and Barney and Pomp at once began to raise it.

When it was up and in position, Frank touched the knob of the wire that set the electric battery to work.

"Do you think you can hold on?" he asked the leader.

"Oh, yes, I think we can."

"All right," and the next moment he sent an electric shock coursing around the "Marvel," and along the cotton-hooks, that raised every mother's son of them to his feet. It also raised their hair, opened their eyes, and caused them to lift up their voices in a wild chorus of yells. They squirmed and twisted about, and tried in vain to let go of the hooks.

Fully five minutes did Frank keep them



hanging on, and yelling like lunatics, and then he let up on them. They fell down, utterly exhausted, the worst used-up set of men ever seen.

"Why don't you hold on to us?" Frank asked, as soon as their yells had ceased. "Take another hold, and get a good one. Nothing like holding on, you know."

"Oh, Lord, I'm killed!" groaned one of the men.

"I'm all out of joint!" moaned another, and groans came from nearly the whole batch.

"You won't take me, will you?" Frank asked.

"Yes," said the leader. "I'll have you dead or alive;" and he drew a six-shooter, as if he intended to try the argument of powder and lead.

"See here," said Frank, "if you fire a shot at this boat, we will riddle you with bullets."

"You'll hang if you do."

"No; you know better than that. I am in the employ of the Governor of the State, with instructions to defend myself and the treasure in my charge against such chaps as you; and you can bet your life that I am going to do it."

"But the governor's instructions can't screen you when you commit murder," said a man of the party.

"No; but to kill men who first shoot at me is not murder. Don't you make any mistakes, my good friends. I understand your game, and am ready to trump you every time."

The very confident manner and tone of the young inventor had the effect to stagger the men in the boat. They gazed at each other in mute silence for several minutes, and then Frank said:

"Take hold again. Perhaps you will be able to take us all next time."

They made no reply to his suggestion.

"I have a big pile of gold on board," added Frank, after a pause. "You may get it, you know."

"Don't want the gold," growled the man; "I want you."

"Well, why don't you take me? You are a very poor sheriff. I am thinking. By the way, what are you? What office do you hold?"

"I am a constable."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"And you have a warrant for my arrest?"

"Yes."

"On a charge of murder?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Well, you may come inside here and serve it on me."

The man was surprised.

"Come out and give yourself up," he suggested.

"Oh, no," said Frank. "You may come inside and—"

"But I won't go inside."

"You shall. I know just what your duty is, and you shall perform it. Climb up on top of this boat, and you'll find a little door there through which you can descend."

"But I won't, I say."

"Then I'll arrest you for the non-performance of your duty," said Frank. "Get your guns."

Leslie, Barney, and Pomp immediately presented Winchester repeating rifles.

"Surrender, now, or we'll blow you all to kingdom come!" cried Frank.

The men in the boat immediately fired at our hero and his companions through the fine steel wire-netting. Of course the bullets mashed and dropped into the water.

Cr-r-rack! went four rifles, and four men in the boat fell dead. They were at too close quarters for any mere wounding.

The others were appalled.

"Do you surrender?" Frank asked. "You see, I mean business."

"Yes," faltered the constable.

"Very well. Come aboard. I know very well that you are no constable. You are a fraud. I will turn you over to the Governor at New Orleans."

The man at once tore up the paper he had

produced as a warrant, and threw the fragments into the river.

"Gather up every piece of that paper," cried Frank, "or, by the powers of darkness, I'll send you to the bottom with an ounce of lead in your brain!" and he leveled his unerring Winchester at the man.

"Oh, God!" groaned the wretch. "Don't shoot!"

"Get every scrap of that paper, or you are a dead man!"

The five men in the boat then took up the oars and proceeded to follow the bits of paper, which the sluggish current had carried away some little distance down the stream.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### DISPOSING OF THE PRISONER.

THE villains gathered up every scrap of the torn paper, as they dared not refuse. Frank and the others in the "Marvel" kept them covered with the fatal Winchesters. Four men were lying dead in the boat—a terrible reminder of the peril they were exposed to.

When they were all gathered up, Frank ordered the constable to come on board and put them together again.

The man dared not disobey. He climbed up on top of the steel roof of the "Marvel," where Frank opened a small door about two feet square.

"Drop through," said our hero, "and we'll see that you don't get hurt till you reach New Orleans."

The villain dropped down into the "Marvel," where Barney and Leslie seized and disarmed him.

"Now bind him strong and fast," said Frank. "We'll see if the Governor can't punish a man who goes about trying to arrest people on bogus warrants." Then, turning to the other men in the boat, he said: "Get away now as fast as you can. You don't want to lose a minute. This is the most dangerous spot in the world to you. Be off with you now."

They needed no second invitation, but laid to their oars with all their might and pulled for the left bank of the river. Then they sprang ashore and hurried away into the woods as fast as their heels could carry them.

"Now, old fellow," he added, turning to the prisoner, "I ought to hang you, on general principles, but I won't. I am anxious to see what they will do to a man like you. Have you anything to say?"

"Not a word. I am beaten."

"Just what I think, too," said Leslie. "There are more fools in this State than I had any idea of."

"What's your name?" Frank asked.

The man made no reply.

"You won't give your name?"

"No."

"Very well, sir. It makes no difference, as long as we can swear to the man."

Frank then took the bits of paper and pasted them together, so as to make out the whole document. It was a forged warrant, which the daring villains had gotten up to give a covering of law to their proceedings.

"Now we can make preparations to leave this part of the country," said Frank. "We have done all we came here to do, and have no further need to stay. Just tie that man to the netting on the bow there, and—but no; I don't want him there—nor anywhere else about, as for that matter. Confound it! I ought to hang him, and be done with him."

"Just what I think," said Leslie, who was particularly savage in his hatred of the villains, "or else tie a bag of shot to him and throw him overboard to the alligators. Why should we bother with such as he?"

"You are right, Leslie. I don't care to be bothered with him, now that I have thought over the matter. I say, you rascal, which way had you better die? I'll give you your choice in the matter—a favor you don't deserve by any means."

The man looked hard at him for a minute or two, and then asked:

"Do you mean it?"

"Well, do things look as if we are playing tag with you?"

"No; I should say not."

"Of course not. Just make your choice, and that'll end the matter. You have lived too long already."

"Will you abide by my choice?"

"Yes; I'll keep my word."

"Then I'll choose to die of old age," said the prisoner.

Frank looked at him for nearly a minute, and finally said:

"That's an old joke, but you have saved your life by it. Cut him loose, Pomp, and throw him overboard. He can swim ashore, I guess."

"Yes," said Leslie, "if the alligators don't stop him."

"Oh, I'm not responsible for the alligators."

Pomp cut the bonds, and the prisoner stood up on his feet.

"You won't make me swim for it, mister?" he asked, turning to the young inventor.

"Won't I? Just you wait and see if I don't. Come, throw him over, Pomp."

Frank turned the crank that let down the steel roof, and thus made the "Marvel" look like an ordinary open boat.

Pomp seized the fellow and gave him a toss. The rascal clutched Pomp by the collar of his coat and jerked him overboard with him.

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Frank.

"He has carried Pomp over with him."

"Oh, Pomp's all right," said Leslie, laughing heartily, as the two came puffing and blowing to the surface.

"You mean white trash!" roared Pomp, spurring a gill of muddy water from his mouth. "I se er gwine ter butt youse fo' dis," and he struck out toward the shore with the fellow. They made for the shore opposite to that on which the others had just landed.

In five minutes they reached the bank and climbed up on it.

In the meantime Frank had followed them closely with the "Marvel," to render aid to Pomp in case any alligators should make their appearance.

"Now look out dar, you mean white trash!" cried Pomp, lowering his head to make a run at him.

"I'll kill you!" hissed the man, placing himself in attitude of defense.

Pomp knew that his weapons had been taken from him, and, therefore, had nothing to fear from him. He made a charge, and struck the villain in the stomach, doubling him up like a jack-knife, and knocking him at least ten feet away.

"Good for you, Pomp!" cried Frank. "Give him another when he gets up again."

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, growing excited over the affair. "Lave me git at 'im. The naygur will be afther spiln' an illigant ruction! Sure, an' its meself as wud bate the head off av him!"

"Oh, let Pomp butt the wind out of him. It's Pomp's affair, you know."

"So it is," admitted the Irishman; "but the naygur will spile it wid his woolly head. Och, do yez moind that now! Whoop, hit 'im wid your fisht, ye spalpeen!"

The man had risen to his feet, and Pomp had butted him again, laying him out as neatly as a railroad engine could have done it.

The sight was particularly exasperating to Barney, whose love of a ruction was aroused.

He whooped and yelled like a lunatic, and danced around the deck, till Leslie thought he was going to jump overboard.

"Keep quiet, Barney!" said Frank. "It's Pomp's circus. Don't interfere with him."

"Oh, me sow!" groaned Barney, as he saw Pomp giving his game another taste of his head. "Do yez moind him, spiln' an illigant ruction like that! Begob, but it's killin' me he is wid his naygur foolishness."

Pomp gave the wretch three butts, after which the rascal lay on the ground groaning and cursing, more dead than alive.

"Get up dar, you mean white trash!" called Pomp, as he stood over the prostrate form of the villain.



"Oh, leave me alone!" groaned the man, not daring to get up and face that terrible battering-ram again.

"Got enough, hab youse?"

"Yes—more than enough," was the groaning reply.

"Then come aboard, Pomp," said Frank, "and leave him alone."

"Reckon he won't pull no mo' niggers in de ribber," said Pomp, as he came back on board the "Marvel," which had pressed up against the bank to receive him.

He at once exchanged his wet clothes for dry ones, and then went about his business as though nothing had happened to disturb his serenity.

That night the "Marvel" remained at anchor in the middle of the river, whilst Frank proceeded with his work of writing up his report to the governor.

He was particular in describing the locality, and all the events of the week. To this he had Leslie, Barney and Pomp affix their signatures as witnesses.

"That ends the business here," said Frank.

"To-morrow we will start down the river. I shall not travel at night except at ordinary speed, as we have too much at stake."

The next morning they were up bright and early. Pomp prepared a dainty breakfast, and, after all had eaten, cleared the table and took his place as a boat-hand on deck.

"Up with the anchor!" cried Frank.

Barney and Pomp sprang forward and began raising the anchor.

Frank was at his post, and Leslie stood ready to fire a blank cartridge from the little brass cannon on the forward deck.

At a signal from Frank the match was applied, and the report of the little cannon awoke all the echoes of the vast forests on either side of the river.

The next moment the "Marvel" shot off down the river like a thing of life, bearing on board an enormous treasure.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE VILLAINS' LAST STAND—DEFEAT.

MILE after mile was reeled off, the gallant "Marvel" cutting through the water like a knife. Several times they ran into great flocks of ducks swimming quietly on the water. So fast did the thing move, and so noiselessly, that the ducks were actually struck before they attempted to rise on the wing.

"Hanged if I don't try my hand at duck shooting," said Frank. "Get the two shot guns, Pomp."

Pomp went in and soon returned with two very fine doubled-barreled shot guns, together with the proper ammunition for them.

"Take one, Leslie," said Frank, "and try your hand at duck shooting."

"I used to be a good shot," remarked Leslie, as he took the gun.

"Let down the roof, Barney," ordered Frank.

Barney turned the crank that controlled the steel roof and wire netting, and in another moment they were standing on the deck, with only the blue sky above them.

"Now, show us another flock of ducks," said Frank, looking ahead in the direction they were going. "I feel very like a sportsman to-day."

Going around a bend in the river, they ran suddenly into another flock. There were thousands of them.

"There they are! Let 'em have both barrels!"

Frank and Leslie fired both charges, and about a score of ducks were laid out on the water.

"Hi—ye!" yelled Pomp. "Dat's mo' ducks dan we'll eat for supper, suah."

"Load up again—quick!" cried Frank. "They'll circle round this way in a few minutes."

In a little while they got another shot at them on the wing, and brought down some half a score more.

"That's good work," remarked Leslie.

"Yes, very good. Ducks are plentiful about here, it seems."

"Millions of them. They are good eating in the fall of the year."

"But they are not good eating now."

"Well, not very. If you are very hungry, though, and they are well cooked, you might relish them."

"They are good shooting, anyhow. I guess Pomp can manage to give us a good dinner of duck to-morrow."

"Dat's er fac', Marse Frank," assented Pomp, who prided himself on his skill as a cook.

They gathered up a dozen of the dead ducks, and then went on their way down the river.

Another flock was found about three miles further down the river, and a goodly number were obtained out of it. Every mile or two they found flocks, out of which they managed to secure a number of birds.

In going round a bend they saw several deer on the river-bank, gazing at the fast-speeding "Marvel."

"Quick—the rifles!" cried Frank.

The weapons were handed him and Leslie, and in another minute two of the beautiful animals were shot.

"Ah! we must have some venison for supper," said Frank. "Run in there and get a couple of hams, Pomp."

The "Marvel" was run into the bank, and Pomp sprang ashore, and secured the hams of one of the animals, with which he returned on board.

"Now off with you, Barney."

Barney was the pilot for the time being, and he sent the "Marvel" careering down-stream at a tremendous speed.

It was quite late in the afternoon when Frank was standing on the deck, looking out for ducks or any other game. He espied something that seemed like a slender line extending across the river. He looked again, and saw that the river was quite narrow at that point, and that a number of boats were partially concealed under the overhanging bushes.

"Ah! there's danger here!" he exclaimed, as he sprang forward and hoisted the steel roof over the party.

"What's the matter?" asked Leslie.

"Danger!" cried Frank. "Go slow, Barney—very slow. Here, let me run her! Get your rifles and stand ready to fight at the word."

His orders were quickly obeyed. He slacked up and neared the wire—which it proved to be—very slowly.

There were several wires secured around trees on both sides of the river—over a dozen of them.

"Halt!" came a voice from the thicket on the left bank.

"Who halts me?" demanded our hero, looking in the direction of the voice.

"I do," came the reply.

"But who are you?"

"Never mind who I am. You want to halt."

"Well, I am halted."

"Come into the bank here."

"I won't."

"Then I'll fire on you."

"Fire away."

"I don't want to hurt you."

"You can't do any harm. Blaze away as soon as you please."

A dozen rifles blazed forth, and as many bullets mashed against the wire-netting and fell into the water.

"Now you see what fools you are, don't you?" called out Frank in a very mild tone of voice.

"Oh, we can take care of you," said the enemy. "Don't you be uneasy."

"I am not in the least uneasy. I am going to cut those wires, and go on down the river as merry as a lark."

"I reckon not."

"We'll see."

"And Frank gave the wheel in charge of Barney, and went into the cabin where his tool chest was. There he found an instrument for cutting wires, nails, and such things.

"Now, Barney," he said to the Irishman, "move up slowly to the wires. Pomp, turn that crank there till the roof opens about six inches. There, that'll do. Steady, Barney."

With the sides closed and the front opened but an inch or two, the "Marvel" moved up to the wires. Frank reached out the cutter without exposing even a finger, and clipped the wires before the villains were aware of his tactics.

Then they began yelling and firing like wild savages. But Frank never stopped till he had clipped the last wire. Then he ordered the top closed and the force to stand to their arms.

"Go slow—let her drift. They may come out and show themselves."

So they did. They thought the prize was about to escape them, and ran along the bank yelling and firing.

"Now let 'em have it!" cried Frank, and the deadly Winchester began their work.

At every shot a man fell to rise no more.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

The enemy replied in hot haste, but without avail. In five minutes nearly a score were killed.

Then they suddenly became aware of the fact that they were being slaughtered with a merciless ferocity, and, with yells of baffled rage, fled back into the gloomy shadows of the forest.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### RESCUING A MAIDEN—A BULLY'S DEATH.

As the last man disappeared from sight, Barney gave a regular old Irish whoop of triumph, and Leslie fired off the brass cannon as a parting salute to the villains.

"That settles 'em," said Frank. "This was their last stand. They thought they had us foul with their wires, thinking we could not cut 'em without exposing ourselves to their fire."

"Yes, they felt sure of us this time," remarked Leslie.

"We won't hear from them again. This breaks 'em all up. We can go on in peace now. I wonder how many of the villains we killed?"

"I don't know. If you will put me on shore I will go and see how many are there."

"Oh, that would be incurring unnecessary risks," said Frank, shaking his head.

"Not at all. I've been over many a battlefield where the ground was strewn with the dead and dying. I don't think there's any danger at all."

"Well, never mind. We won't waste any time on them. Let's get away from here as fast as we can."

"Very well. Just as you say. I don't care three straws about them;" and with that the ex-Confederate turned and laid his rifle down, and proceeded to fill his pipe.

Frank then turned the wheel over to Barney, and looked after getting things to rights again. In a little while he had everything in ship-shape, and then he proceeded to indulge in more duck-shooting till the sun sank down in the west.

"I don't think we had better travel at night under the circumstances," said Frank, "but anchor in the widest part of the river."

They went down a few miles further till they struck just such a place as they wanted. There they stopped and proceeded to catch some fish for supper.

In ten minutes they had more fish than they could eat, and Pomp proceeded to cook them in the highest style of his art.

The night passed with a sound coming from any quarter to disturb them, and when morning came they were off before the last of the stars had faded from view.

"When we strike the Mississippi," said Frank, "we will make as fast time in the night as in daylight. This is a dangerous river at best. I don't intend to take any chances."

"You are doing right," remarked Leslie.

"Take no chances under the circumstances."

Late in the afternoon they came in sight of the Mississippi River—the grandest river in the world—and all on board set up a shout.

"But look there! A young girl is making signals to us in the bushes out there!" cried Leslie.

"Ah! She is in some kind of trouble then,"



said Frank, promptly turning the "Marvel" in her direction.

When they reached the spot, they found a beautiful young girl, plainly yet neatly dressed, standing under the overhanging branches.

"For the love of Heaven, good sirs," she pleaded, "save me! Take me away from here! I'll go anywhere in the wide world to get away from here!"

"My dear young lady," said Frank, "I've heard such pleadings from such lips before, and may Heaven blast me forever when I refuse to aid one in distress. Come on board, and tell us your trouble afterwards."

"Oh, thank God, I've found a friend at last!" cried the poor girl, bounding on board like a young fawn, and seating herself on one of the chairs.

The "Marvel" then moved out into the stream again, and the young inventor went and stood by her side.

"Oh, sir," she cried, turning her eyes upon him with an appealing look, "you don't know what I have suffered! I would rather jump into this water and drown myself than let them get me again! Can you, will you protect me?"

"I both can and will, dear young lady," said Frank; "for I have brave men who are well armed with me, and the fastest boat in the world. Make your mind easy on that point!"

"Stop that boat!" called a voice from the shore near where the young lady had been taken on board.

"Oh, that's him!" cried the young miss, turning deathly pale and shuddering at the very sight of the man. "Don't let him stop you! He is a very dangerous man, and will kill you!"

"Don't have any fears. He will do none of us any harm," and then turning towards the man on the shore, asked:

"What do you want this boat stopped for?"

"That girl you have just taken on board must come back."

"Not unless she desires to do so," replied Frank, very coolly.

"Then we'll see about it," said the man, turning and disappearing from view.

"Oh, he will go after the others," cried the young girl, springing to her feet and looking wildly about her. "Oh, let me get out on the other side of the river where I can hide in the woods! I will drown myself."

"Put up the roof, Barney," whispered Frank to the Irishman, and in another moment the steel roof met above her head.

"Now you see how safe you are, miss," he said. "No bullet can reach us here. Again I say don't be uneasy."

The "Marvel" could have run away and left the scene forever, but Frank naturally wanted to see what the man would undertake to do. So he moved very slowly down the river to give him a chance to do something.

About two miles further down the river a row-boat shot out from the bank, with six armed men in it. Frank actually steered to meet them.

"By the Lord!" exclaimed a man in the bow of the boat. "It's not the same boat, but there's the girl all the same. Hello, there!"

"Hello, there!" returned Frank, in a similar tone and manner.

"Where are you going with that girl?"

"To New Orleans."

"Not by a darned sight. I'm her guardian, and I demand that she be given up to me at once!"

"Well, you talk big for a small man," said Frank, sneeringly. "If the young lady refuses to go with you I'll protect her."

"I do refuse to go!" exclaimed the girl. "He is a brute!"

"That settles it," says Frank. "You may go on about your business, sir. You won't get the lady in your power again."

The man swore that he would have her if he had to kill every man on board the "Marvel."

Frank merely laughed at him, and said:

"When the fool-killer comes round you had better hide, my waspish friend. Good-bye; I'm off!"

"Hold on! If you go I'll fire on you!"

"Of course you will, and then we'll fire on

you, and kill every one of you. Fools get wiped out that way."

The "Marvel" started off, and, true to his threat, the bully fired, as did the other five men with him. The bullets mashed against the wire netting and dropped harmlessly into the water.

"Turn and run 'em down, Pomp," said Frank. "They are not worth shooting."

The "Marvel" made a quick turn, and charged on the little boat. It struck it amid-ship, and sent it down, throwing the six men into the water. Two of them could not swim, and they were soon drowned. The bully struck out boldly for the shore, being a good swimmer.

"Run him down again, Pomp," whispered Frank to the faithful black.

"Yes, sah!"

And the "Marvel" rushed after him.

"Let me give you a lift," cried out Frank to the swimmer, as they neared him.

"Let me alone!" replied the man, striking out boldly.

The next moment the "Marvel" rushed over him, and he went down in the muddy waters of Red River, never to rise again.

"That settles him," said Frank.

"Is he dead?" exclaimed the girl.

"Yes; he is drowned."

"Thank God!" and she burst into tears as she sank down in the chair again.

"What do you wish to do now?" Frank asked. "You can accompany us to New Orleans. I have plenty of money, which you can use till you can see your way clear out of your troubles."

"Oh, thank you, sir! You are so kind. I have a large fortune in that man's hands. He was a bad, reckless man, and tried to force me into a marriage with him to get my fortune into his grasp. Everybody was afraid of him, and no one here dared befriend me. I am of age, and had demanded my inheritance of him. Oh, you have saved me from the worst man that ever lived!"

"Well, I am truly glad that you are rid of the rascal. You had better go on down to New Orleans, and place your affairs in the hands of the district attorney."

"Yes, sir; I think so, too," she assented; and he then gave up the cabin to her use, and the "Marvel" sped on down the river.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### DOWN THE RIVER—NEW ORLEANS.

On the way down the river the young lady who had been so gallantly rescued from the clutches of her cruel guardian gave her name as Abbie Bean, only daughter of a very wealthy planter, who had died when she was but ten years old. Her fortune had been left in charge of Willis Wyatt, a school-mate of her father, and he, having wasted his own inheritance by reckless and riotous living, sought to force his ward into a hasty marriage with himself.

Of course the young lady, now of age to receive her fortune, naturally rebelled, and then followed his cruel and inhuman attempts to force her to marry him. She made many desperate attempts to escape, but failed in all till at last she ran down to the river to drown herself. Hope of escape revived in her breast, however, the moment she caught sight of the "Marvel" speeding along down the red current.

Something prompted her to make the signals that attracted the attention of our hero, and the rescue immediately followed.

Such was the story she related to our hero, through her tears, as they sailed down the river and passed into the rolling Mississippi.

She was beautiful in both form and features, with clear, sparkling, truthful eyes, pearly teeth, and lips that were like rosebuds in their modest fullness. As she spoke, Leslie stood by entranced, listening like one in a dream, drinking in the music of her voice. As yet he had not spoken to her. Frank, as soon as her story had ended, introduced him as his friend and companion, and said:

"You shall not lack for friends, Miss Bean, in

your efforts to regain your inheritance. You will have no trouble, however, after the State officials take hold of the case. Wyatt being now dead, will greatly simplify matters. I congratulate you on your prospects."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" and her tears flowed afresh. "But I am so sorry that you have had to destroy human life on my account. Will it not trouble you in the future?"

"Not in the least, Miss Bean," he answered. "Men who deliberately try to kill me or my friends, while I am in the discharge of my duty, receive no mercy at my hands. You heard me warn him, did you not?"

"Oh, yes, sir—and you never fired a shot!"

"Exactly. You see, I always keep inside the law, which gives a man the right to defend himself, you know."

"Oh, sir, no one can blame you. But what a wonderful boat this is! It goes through the water at railroad speed, and makes no noise. What kind of a boat is it?"

"It is run by electricity," said Frank, very modestly.

She sprang up and gazed at the young inventor, as if she regarded him as something more than human, and asked:

"Are you Mr. Frank Reade?"

"That's my name, miss."

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, sinking down into the chair, "I am safe! All the world has heard of Frank Reade, the brave and the true."

Frank blushed like a school-girl, but made no remark.

The day passed into twilight, and then Barney took charge of the helm, in order that Pomp might prepare supper.

When the table was spread, Miss Bean was amazed at the sumptuous repast before her.

"Why, this is a feast fit for a king, Mr. Reade!" she exclaimed, as she surveyed the table.

"Then I hope the queen will find it to her taste," said Frank, laughing. "I told the cook the queen would take supper with us to-night."

She laughed good-naturedly, and exclaimed:

"Oh, you are as good at compliments as at inventions, Mr. Reade."

"Am I? Well, it's the first time in my life I ever tried my hand at it. You are the first lady who ever became a passenger on board the "Marvel." The governor's family took a short sail on it in New Orleans. Hence, you see we feel highly honored by your presence on board."

They were seated at table, and then Pomp, in snowy white apron, waited on them with all the dignity acquired by his long experience.

Such a sumptuous repast the beautiful young lady had never seen before, and she enjoyed it to the fullest extent.

They sat up till quite late looking at the stars, the lights here and there along the shore, and the passing steamers, then Leslie, who had a splendid baritone voice, sang several sentimental songs, much to her delight.

Unable to restrain himself, Pomp brought out his banjo and began tuning up. Barney was at the wheel, and, there, could not dance. But Leslie sang with the instrument, and finally Frank and the lady joined in with them, making a concert of sweet sounds that charmed the passengers on the deck of a passing steamer.

At a late hour Frank escorted her to the door of his cabin, saying:

"This is your room, Miss Bean. Lock the door, and you will be in your castle, with none to molest or make you afraid."

"Ah! How could one be afraid under the protection of two such gallant gentlemen? I am perfectly at ease, Mr. Reade."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Miss Bean. May you sleep well and have sweet dreams. Good-night."

"Good-night."

She entered the cabin and closed the door.

Then, after arranging the watch, Frank himself retired, and thus the night passed without anything of note occurring to disturb their serenity.



They were all up early the next morning. The sun rose bright and clear in a cloudless sky, giving them a view of river scenery seldom seen by any of them.

After breakfast, the steel roof and wire netting being turned down, they promenaded the little deck, and viewed the ever-changing scenery which the great speed of the "Marvel" brought round.

"Ah! There's the city below there," said Leslie, who had grown very attentive to Miss Bean. "We shall reach it in another hour."

She gazed long and thoughtfully in the direction of the city, and heaved a sigh. Then she sat down to wait till the "Marvel" reached her destination.

To amuse her, Leslie got the spy-glass, and pointed out to her all the places of interest along the river in the vicinity of the city. She became deeply interested, and charmed him so much with her conversational powers that long ere they reached the foot of Canal street he was madly in love with her.

At last the "Marvel" stopped at a place where it would not be in the way of the steam-boats, and made fast.

"Now, Leslie, will you go in and report to the governor?" the young hero asked of the ex-Confederate.

"Yes," he replied; "it's my duty to do so," and he prepared to go at once.

"What shall I do, Mr. Reade?" Miss Bean asked.

"Stay where you are and be happy. The governor will tell you what to do. When I have transacted my business with the governor I shall be at your service as long as you need me."

"You are too kind, Mr. Reade. I don't know how I can ever repay you for—"

"Don't mention it, please," said he, interrupting her. "I have been happier for what I have done. It was the duty of a gentleman, and I tried to perform it."

"That's so," said Leslie, as he bowed himself out of the presence of Abbie Bean and went ashore.

Two hours later the governor came down in a carriage, accompanied by Leslie. Then a covered wagon, guarded by a file of soldiers, followed.

"Reade!" exclaimed the governor, grasping Frank's hand and shaking it cordially, "you have succeeded. I had faith in you."

"Thanks, governor. I have every keg here on board. We opened two, and found the yellow stuff all there. When shall I turn them over to you?"

"Right now. Here's the wagon and guards." "Then you may proceed to load up, for I am anxious to get rid of the responsibility."

The governor then gave the necessary orders, and the kegs were soon transferred to the wagons.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE HAPPY MARRIAGE.

WHEN the last keg was transferred to the wagon Frank drew a long breath of relief, and said:

"That takes a heavy load off my shoulders. It was a terrible responsibility to have charge of so much money."

"Yes," said Leslie, "but you have been equal to the task, though!"

"It cost a deal of bloodshed. Do you know, governor, that over two score of men have been killed in getting that treasure here?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed the governor.

"Yes. We were attacked several times by men who swore that it was anybody's money, and that they were determined to have some of it. We had to use our rifles mercilessly."

"You did right. I gave you orders to defend yourself, and I am glad that you did."

Then Abbie Bean was introduced to the governor, and her story told him. The gallant official was at once interested, and promised to have her fortune restored to her at every hazard.

"You can make my house your home, Miss

Bean," he said, "until you can take charge of your estate."

"Oh, how can I ever repay such kindness!" exclaimed Abbie. "I have received nothing but kindness ever since I first saw this wonderful boat."

"My dear young lady," said the governor, taking her hand in his, "the man who, in this age, is not kind to one of your sex when in distress, is worse than a brute. Without woman man would have nothing to love, and without love life is not worth living. A sacrifice for woman is one of a true man's highest pleasures. You confer a pleasure on us by appealing to us for protection."

"Oh, that the world had more of such men!" exclaimed the grateful girl.

Frank and Leslie then accepted Governor Lyle's invitation to dine with him that evening, after which Abbie went away with him in his carriage.

That evening the two adventurous spirits appeared at the governor's mansion, dressed in the regulation dress suit of the day, and found Abbie radiant and beautiful. She was about the same size as the governor's daughter, who had placed her wardrobe at her disposal.

There were other guests present—men of distinguished reputations. But Frank Reade, Jr., was the lion of the evening. Young as he was, his fame, as an inventor and traveler, had gone round the world. Brave men and fair women honored him of whom they had heard so much, and they congratulated him on the success of his last venture.

It was a late hour when Frank and Leslie returned to the "Marvel," leaving pretty Abbie Bean with the governor's family. The next day the report of the operations up on Red River was submitted to the governor, and met his prompt approbation. It was immediately published, creating the most intense excitement in the city.

Much to Frank's surprise, he was kept in the city of New Orleans more than two weeks, waiting for his prize money. He knew something about red tape, however, and did not grow impatient.

But during that time thousands of people came down to the river to visit the "Marvel." Since the report of the expedition was published, everybody had a desire to see the wonderful boat which had withstood a storm of bullets and the attack of angry alligators. The recovery of such a vast sum of gold from the muddy depths of the tortuous Red River caused a sensation from one end of the country to the other, and the hero was toasted and honored in every possible way.

During the two weeks that our hero was detained in the city, Jack Leslie visited pretty Abbie Bean every day, entertaining her with stories of adventure by flood and field, till she began to look for him with a timid eagerness, that told but too plainly that her heart was his.

One evening he laid his heart at her feet, and asked her to be his wife, and she consented—as happy as ever maiden was—for she had grown to love him dearly for his sterling worth. He was old enough to be her father, but love tore away the marks of time and made him young again, in her eyes.

"Ah! my dear friend!" exclaimed Frank, grasping his hand when he heard of the engagement, "I am glad for her sake as well as yours. You are just the man to protect her and her rights, and make her happy all the days of her life. You have made a small fortune on this expedition. Hasten the marriage and take a bridal trip up the river on the "Marvel." Stop a month with me at Readestown and get acquainted with the people you fought against in the great civil war."

"Thanks, my dear Reade," said the happy fellow. "I'll see her this evening, and see if she will consent to that. It would please me very much, I assure you."

That evening he pleaded with Abbie to consent to an immediate union. She finally agreed to become his wife within a week.

He gave her plenty of gold—the proceeds of his share in the sunken treasure—and she lost

no time in ordering a bridal outfit, and a wardrobe in keeping with her wealth and social position.

Governor Lyle and his family approved the match, and made preparations to give them a grand wedding banquet at which the elite of the city were to be invited.

The romance of their acquaintance and engagement spread through the city, and a deep interest was excited in the public mind.

Frank and the governor's daughter were to stand up with them, and the governor himself would give the bride away.

How beautiful and happy the young bride looked! How her bosom heaved with emotions of joy and love! And what a strong, manly arm it was she leaned upon! Jack Leslie, brave, generous, and true, was as happy as ever mortal could be, swore to devote his life to the promotion of her happiness, and every one present knew that he would keep his word.

The ceremony over, Frank was the first man to kiss the bride.

"Abbie," he said, "you little thought you were catching a husband when you stood on the banks of Red River signaling to us for help."

"No; I never dreamed of such a thing," she said. "But I am now glad that I was driven to that course, for it gave me my dear Jack."

"Well, you could not have found a better protector in all the world than Jack Leslie. May you live long and happy, and enjoy all the pleasures that fall to the lot of those who love and marry for love's sake," and then he kissed her again, and gave way to others who desired the same privilege.

After the banquet dancing followed, Frank opening the dance with the bride.

"Hold!" cried a stern voice in the doorway. "I forbid the marriage."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A STRANGE SCENE AT A WEDDING.

THE sudden interruption, together with the stern, harsh voice of the speaker, created an intense excitement throughout the room. The music instantly ceased, and every eye was turned toward the stranger—a tall, dark man of forbidding aspect.

"By what right do you forbid it, sir?" demanded Governor Lyle, turning to the stranger, his eyes blazing with indignation.

"By the right of next friend," was the reply.

"You are too late, Mr. Andrews," said Abbie, bravely confronting the new-comer. "I am now Mrs. Leslie. You have had your trouble for your pains."

"What! Are you really married, Abbie?"

"Yes, sir; and here is my husband—the man of my choice—who is able to protect me from you and all of Wyatt's friends," and she took Jack Leslie's arm and led him up to the spot where the stranger was standing.

Jack looked the man full in the face and asked:

"Are you one of Willis Wyatt's friends?"

"Yes—and also the friend of her father when he was alive," was the reply. "You had no right to run off with a young girl and marry her against the wishes of all her friends."

"But for the presence of these ladies, I would teach you a lesson about interfering in the affairs of others," said Jack, very coolly. "You had better return to your home and make up your mind that your section is particularly blest in not having received a visit from the Fool Killer."

"You are a worthless adventurer, who—"

"Stop there!" exclaimed the governor, promptly interrupting him. "I have known Jack Leslie since boyhood, and can say that he is a brave, true man. I urged Miss Bean to marry him. I have also instructed the State's attorney to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law all those who had been in any way engaged in this wicked persecution of her. Now leave here, sir."

The man turned pale at the stern words of the governor, and, as he turned away, hissed:

"He is a thief to steal a girl's fortune that way!"



No sooner had the words escaped his lips than Leslie sprang forward and dealt him a blow that laid him at full length on the floor.

The next moment the brave ex-Confederate turned to the excited guests, and said:

"Pardon me, dear friends, I could not resist the temptation to punish the insulting wretch!"

"Oh, we'll pardon you under the circumstances," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly.

"Look out! He's going to shoot!" cried some one in the crowd, as Andrews rose and drew a revolver.

But ere he could use the weapon he was seized by those near him and hustled out of the house and turned over to the police, who carried him to the station-house and locked him up, charged with disorderly conduct.

"Who is this man Andrews, Abbie?" Jack Leslie asked of his bride.

"A friend of my father, and later a partner of my late guardian in some business matters."

"Ah! That accounts for it. He is mixed up in Wyatt's affairs in some way."

"He is considered a very dangerous man up at home," said the fair young bride, "and he will never forgive you that blow."

"Oh, I'll never ask his forgiveness, as for that matter," said Jack. "Let the dance go on."

The festivities were resumed and continued to a late hour.

Then the guests dispersed and retired to their homes, leaving the young couple at the governor's mansion till the next morning, when they were to go on board the "Marvel" for a trip up the river.

The next morning the bridal party came down to the river in carriages. After an affectionate leave-taking, Leslie and his bride went on board, and the "Marvel" moved out into the stream.

Then Barney, who was at the wheel, sent the "Marvel" up the river at the highest rate of speed the powerful electric battery could give it. In a few minutes the great city was slipping away out of sight in the dim distance.

The steel roof was a protection from the heat of the sun, while the steel wire netting admitted the fresh air on all sides.

"This has been the most profitable trip to you, Leslie," said our hero, as he sat near the bridge an hour or so after leaving the city.

"How so?" demanded Leslie. "My share of the prize amounts to nearly \$200,000."

"So it does, and I have it all in drafts on Chicago. But you got a wife in the bargain, for whom you would not take ten million dollars."

"Ah! you are right there, my dear friend," said Leslie, bestowing a loving glance on his blushing bride. "I have secured the greater prize. I am indebted to you for it, too," and he grasped the young inventor's hand and wrung it with a cordiality that brought tears to his eyes.

"Marse Frank," said Pomp, suddenly interrupting them, "dem ar' steamers out dere am er racin' agin each oder."

Frank sprang up and gazed out at two splendid steamers that were racing side by side against the current of the mighty river. Huge volumes of smoke rolled from the great black smoke-stacks as the firemen piled in the wood in the overheated furnaces.

"By George!" exclaimed Frank, "they are doing their best, and they seem to be about evenly matched as to speed."

"Yes," said Leslie. "There's great rivalry between competing lines on the river, and terrible accidents often happen in these foolish races."

"It ought to be put a stop to by law. It is dangerous to both life and property. Shoot past them, Barney. And, Pomp?"

"Sah?"

"Let down the roof so we can have a better view of the two steamers as they run."

Pomp let down the roof of the "Marvel," and then the little party of three again sat down on chairs and gazed at the huge steamers cleaving their way through the water.

The "Marvel" glided past one of them as easily as a bird on the wing could have done,

to the utter amazement of the officers and passengers on board.

"Where are you bound?" Frank asked of the captain.

"St. Louis. Whither are you bound?" came back from the steamer.

"Chicago; but I'll stop long enough at St. Louis to tell them you are coming, if you so wish."

"Blast your impudence!" roared the captain.

"Do you think you can get there before I do?"

"Yes; at least one day ahead of you," said Frank.

"What in thunder do you mean? You are nothing but a skiff. What in blazes are you, anyhow?"

"Just a little pleasure-boat," was the reply, as the "Marvel" shot ahead and began crossing the bow of the steamer.

It not only crossed her bow, but turned and went completely around her.

Captain and passengers were dumfounded with amazement.

Both steamers strained their machinery to the utmost in a terrible effort to beat the other.

Suddenly there came an explosion—a crash that sounded like a thunderbolt—and in a moment half a hundred human beings were hurled into eternity, and one of the steamers was a wreck, floating with the current.

"My God!" exclaimed Frank; "she has burst her boiler! Scores are killed! Just look at those people struggling in the water! Quick, Barney! Run in there and let's save as many lives as we can!"

Barney was at the wheel. He lost no time in making for the wreck. Scores were struggling in the water. Some were drowning. Others were clinging to cotton bales and bits of timber, and screaming for help.

In ten minutes Frank and Leslie had saved ten women and children. Those they rushed to the banks and put ashore, and returned for more.

Thus four hours passed, during which time they saved nearly two score of lives and put them ashore. The rival steamer also rounded to and gave all the assistance in her power. But for all that the foolish rivalry had sent nearly half a hundred souls into eternity.

The prompt and rapid assistance rendered by the "Marvel" excited the wonder and admiration of all the survivors of the disaster. And many were the expressions of gratitude that were heard on all sides.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### HOMEWARD BOUND.

HAVING rendered all the assistance possible to the unfortunate victims of the steamboat explosion, the "Marvel" headed up the river again, leaving the other steamer far behind her.

"Oh, I hope never to witness such another appalling scene again!" exclaimed Mrs. Leslie, as she cast a last look back toward the floating wreck.

"It is by no means a pleasant sight, my dear," said her husband. "But it's a too frequent occurrence on the river, where the fastest boat always receives the most patronage. That was the fourth explosion I have witnessed on the Mississippi."

"Ah! It was not the first time, then. I thought you did not get excited."

"Oh, no. It was not new to me," said he. "There ought to be a law to hang any captain who races his boat unless it's to see which can go slowest."

"In that case there would be no racing, then."

"Of course not. That's just what ought to be stopped."

"Did you ever see such a beautiful sunset?" Frank asked, looking away toward the west, where the sun was placing a magnificent silver lining on an immense bank of snowy clouds.

"Oh, how beautiful!" cried the young bride, her sweet face all aglow with the beauty of the scene.

"Did you know that our friend Reade has

more than once sailed through the clouds, miles and miles above the earth?"

"What!" exclaimed Abbie, in the greatest surprise imaginable.

"Why, have you not heard of the famous flying-machine, in which he made the trip to Mexico, and there found his wife?"

"Oh, yes, I do remember reading something about it in the papers, but I did not pay much attention to it. Such things did not interest me much at the time. Tell me, Mr. Reade, did you really go up to the clouds?"

"Oh, yes, and was completely shut out from all view of the earth below us. We sometimes got above the clouds, into the clear sunshine, while below us a heavy rain-storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning, deluged the earth."

"Oh, such things seem incredible!" exclaimed the fair bride.

"Yes; they sound like a dream, don't they?" said Jack. "But they are true for all that. Pomp and Barney went with him."

She gazed at the two faithful men in silence for a minute or two, and then asked of Frank:

"Were they frightened?"

"Yes; very much indeed at times," and the gallant young hero had to smile at the recollection of Pomp's terror when the flying-machine, or air-ship, was carried away by a cyclone.

The sun went down and a full moon arose, sending a flood of silvery light over the rolling "Father of Waters."

"How beautiful!" murmured the bride. "Oh, look! What is that great red light away up the river there?" and she pointed to a great ball of fire some three or four miles up the river. "And there's another one further away. What in the world are they?"

"Nothing more than big steamboats, my dear," said Jack. "Those are the signal lights on the lower decks."

She gazed at the lights until the great speed of the "Marvel" sent her past them. Everything seemed to interest her, and she was as happy as her brave husband was.

It was a late hour when they retired, and then Barney and Pomp took charge of the boat for the night.

No pilot was necessary on a boat of such light draft as the "Marvel." It could go anywhere, almost, that an ordinary skiff could, hence our hero had no fears of running aground.

The next morning they were nearly two hundred miles further up the river than when they went to bed the night before. A heavy mist was on the river, and collisions were dangerous. To run at any great speed would be exceedingly dangerous.

"We must tie up and wait till this fog rises," said Frank. "We might creep along at a snail's pace, but that would tire us much more than if we took a rest."

"You are right," said Leslie. "We are not in a hurry, now."

"No. We have all the time we want," said Frank, as he turned the bow of the "Marvel" toward the right bank of the river, and slowly pushed through the fog.

In half an hour or so he touched the bank and crept along for a mile or two till he found a creek emptying into the stream.

"This is just the place. The water here is still, and we can find plenty of fish and game here."

"How long do you think we will have to remain here?" Abbie asked.

"Probably till noon," said Jack.

"Oh, then I will have patience."

"Are you growing impatient, my dear?"

"Yes. I can't help it. I am so anxious to see St. Louis and Chicago."

"We will reach there much sooner than we would had we taken passage on a steamer."

"I know that. Still, when we stop like this, I can't help growing impatient."

"We will reach St. Louis to-morrow," said Frank, "and will stop over a day or two there, to see the city and friends."

Nothing of note occurred on the way up, save the sensation created by the great speed of the "Marvel" among steamboat men along the river towns.



It was about noon the next day when they came in sight of the tall steeples of the queen city of the valley.

"There's St. Louis!" cried Abbie, the moment she caught sight of a tall spire.

"Yes; that's St. Louis," said Frank. "In a half hour we will be there."

They spent two days in the city, riding about in a carriage, taking in all the sights.

Abbie was an eager sight-seer. She was never tired of gazing at the public buildings, parks, and other places of interest.

Frank had some business to attend to in the city, and so did not have time to go with them.

His stay in the city, however, was published; and then thousands of people rushed down to the river to see the "Marvel."

As many more sought to see him, and thus he became greatly embarrassed by the continuous crowds that flocked around.

By some means or other, the story of Abbie Bean and her romantic love and marriage got out, and every young lady in the city wanted to see her and her brave husband.

Jack and Abbie were amazed at their popularity among strangers, and begged Frank to leave at once.

The young inventor was used to such public demonstrations, and did not mind them in the least. But he complied with their request, and set out for Chicago by the same route he had come. Thousands of people cheered them on their way, and the news was telegraphed ahead to all the towns along the Illinois River that the "Marvel" was coming.

Of course the people were as anxious as ever to see the latest invention of the young genius, whose fame had gone round, and flocked to the towns to see it pass.

The first town they struck opened their eyes. Thousands of people lined the river-bank, and cheered them on their way.

"By George, Jack!" exclaimed Frank, his enthusiasm rising with the cheers of his admirers, "we must show the appreciation of their good wishes. Barney, run up the flag-pole, and let the old stars and stripes float in the breeze. Load up the gun, Pomp, and let her roar. Wave your handkerchief, Abbie, and kiss your fingers to them. Jack won't be a bit jealous—eh, old boy?"

"No, by thunder!" and Jack Leslie waved his hat above his head and joined his voice to the roar of the multitude.

Abbie's cheeks grew rosy under the excitement, for she knew that the romance of her love and marriage had touched a tender chord in the popular heart. She was happy, indeed, for the sympathy of the host of unknown friends whom she had never seen before. No wonder, then, that she waved her handkerchief and kissed her little nut-brown hand to the multitude!

But the last boom of the cannon and the last cheer was heard as the "Marvel" turned the bend of the river and sped onward in its course.

## CHAPTER XXV

### CONCLUSION.

EVERY town on the Illinois River gave the "Marvel" a reception as it passed on the way up to Joliet. But it was at that point, where the party were to stop and take the train for Chicago, that the greatest reception of all was to take place.

It was a holiday for every one in the town. Everybody put on holiday attire, and waited and watched for the appearance of the wonderful little craft. Some wanted to see the electric boat; others wanted to see the still more wonderful inventor, while all wanted to see the bride and her gallant husband.

There is a deep vein of sentiment running in the hearts of all, that responds to every call for sympathy in romance and love. The telegraph had flashed all over the land the story of Abbie Bean's love and marriage, both growing out of her desperate attempt to escape from her brutal guardlan. Her escape and the death of her persecutor sent a thrill through the popular heart. But that she should then find refuge in the family of the Governor of the State, and finally marry one of her rescuers in the grand Executive Mansion, read like a romance of the Dark Ages.

When the "Marvel" came in sight a dozen bands of music struck up along the river-bank.

Frank responded with boom after boom from the little brass cannon on the deck.

"This is glorious!" exclaimed Jack Leslie, as he took in the great demonstration at a glance.

"It's more than I expected," said Frank. "I didn't dream the people would take so much interest in the thing."

A small steamer came down the river to meet them, and, as they came abreast, a voice called out from the upper deck:

"How are you, my boy?"

"Why, father!" cried Frank. "You here! I'm glad to see you! Are all well at home?"

"Yes—all well."

"Frank!" called another and softer voice from behind his father, as a beautiful young lady stepped quickly forward, and smiled sweetly down upon him.

"My darling! God bless your sweet face! Come down here, both of you!"

Frank Reade, Sr., led his son's beautiful wife down to the lower deck to where the "Marvel" lay alongside.

The young inventor sprang aboard, and clasped his wife in his arms, and covered her face with kisses.

"Oh, how glad I am that you have returned safely!" said the happy wife, returning his caresses kiss for kiss.

"I have never ceased to think of you, dear, since I left you two months ago," said Frank.

"I know that," she replied, "for I felt in my heart all the time that you were thinking of me."

And then she looked at Abbie, who was

standing by the side of Jack, and bounded over to her, saying:

"Oh! I know you. You are happy, and so am I. The papers have told us all about you, and I love you already. I am Frank's wife."

The two young ladies threw themselves into each other's arms, and kissed with a heartiness that betokened the beginning of an everlasting friendship.

Frank then led his father and wife on board the "Marvel," and away they went up the river, to the point where they were to disembark. There the cheers of the multitude were deafening. Everybody rushed forward to get a glimpse of the famous inventors—father and son—and the fair young bride whose story had touched their hearts.

As they landed, the band struck up "Hail to the Chief," and the whole party marched to the Town Hall, where a reception, lasting three hours, was held.

Barney and Pomp had to run the "Marvel" out into the middle of the stream to avoid being over run by the thousands who wished to get on board and see the wonderful little boat.

Of course, everybody who had read of Frank Reade's adventures had also read of Barney and Pomp.

The sight of Pomp's black face reminded them of many funny incidents in his career, and a running fire of good-natured questions began.

Pomp grinned, and gave replies that made them laugh.

Then they began on Barney, and several hours of pleasant badinage followed.

At last Frank and his party went to a hotel to remain till the next day, when the "Marvel" was to be placed on a car and transferred to Chicago.

The next day the crowd had dispersed, and the work of lifting the "Marvel" out of the water was soon done. Then they all took the train for Chicago, where the boat was launched on the lake. There we will leave it for awhile, and let its wonderful master and builder enjoy the fortune it had made him. He was rich before, but the reward for the recovery of the sunken treasure had doubled his fortune.

Jack Leslie and his fair bride spent the summer at Readestown with the Reades. Then they returned home to Louisiana, to find that the governor had forced a restoration of Abbie's fortune to her.

They are now rich and happy, and regularly once a week write to Frank to thank him for his instrumentality in bringing them together.

The "Marvel" yet floats on the bright waters of Lake Michigan, the greatest curiosity of the age in marine circles. Its owner frequently runs down to the city to skim the lake in it, and consider some of the many offers to purchase, which are being continually made to him. But he is loath to part with it, as he cherishes it for the perils he endured with it ABOVE AND BELOW WATER.

[THE END.]

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